

# **MY FORTY YEARS AT THE YARD**



# MY FORTY YEARS AT THE YARD

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# Part One

## EARLY DAYS IN THE POLICE





## CHAPTER ONE

### A SCOT COMES SOUTH

**T**HE BLACK ISLE in the County of Ross and Cromarty was where I first saw the light of day one fine September morning in 1889. In spite of its name there is nothing dark or sinister about the Black Isle, set as it is amid some of the most picturesque scenery to be found anywhere in the Highlands. One would have to go far to match the beauty which makes this part of the east coast of Scotland one of its abiding joys and a very popular resort for summer visitors. In addition, of course, it abounds in curious legends of superstition and witchcraft.

Knockbain, where I was born, is an agricultural district not far from Munlochy, an ancient village nestling at the head of the bay from which it takes its name, and which opens into the Moray Firth. To the North of Munlochy, like some giant sentinel, is Ormond Hill, on which once stood Avoch Castle (later known as Ormond Castle), a reputed stronghold of Macbeth; while to the South lie the haunted crags and the cave of Craigiehowe, famous in legend.

In that cave, so the story goes, lie the warrior band of the Gaelic hero, Finn. There they have lain through the centuries, resting on their elbows in slumber deep, awaiting the third and final blast on the magic trumpet which lies beside them in the cave. This blast, it is said, ~~will~~ be sounded by someone from the outer world, and

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whenever that call is blown the sleeping warriors will awaken and set forth to 'turn the world upside down.'

I remember as a boy listening spellbound to the story of how one venturesome soul from Munlochry had, long years before, entered that cave and blown two long blasts upon the trumpet. He had then been so scared at the terrifying expressions on the faces of the bestirring warriors that he fled in terror from the scene, not daring to blow that final blast which would have completed their awakening. So the only half-roused warriors sank back into their patient sleep again! I can't say I was ever tempted to sound the call myself.

The Black Isle, and indeed all Ross-shire, abounds with legends of superstition and witchcraft. From the roof of Craigiehowe, quite near the entrance, report declares that water from a well above drips—drips—drips with melancholy monotony on to the floor below. In olden times those stricken with deafness were taken to this spot and made to lie on the ground so that this magic water dripped first into one ear and then into the other, and thus their hearing would be fully restored.

Near Bennetsfield, just above Munlochry Bay, is yet another well said to have power to bring luck provided the person seeking its favours carries out the appropriate formalities—which include placing an offering in the mouth of the well on the first Sunday in May.

I cannot vouch for the truth of any of these legends, but they certainly impressed my boyish imagination.

The Black Isle still retains many traces of its great antiquity, such as the foundations of Ormond Castle, a venerable monument to the ancient family of Moray (or Moravia) which gave Moray Firth its name; and also part of Fortrose Cathedral, beneath whose mouldering ruins lie the remains of Sir Andre Moray and the

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Sir William Wallace. Together they commanded the Scottish armies at the Battle of Stirling Bridge in 1297. Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty, the famous Scottish author, who, over three hundred years ago, wrote a treatise advocating a universal language, was also born in the Black Isle.

A few miles from Knockbain stands Rosehaugh House, erected on the site of the old house of that name once occupied by Sir George Mackenzie. During the rising of the Covenanters Sir George earned for himself the title of 'the Bluidy Mackenzie' because of his ruthless conduct. Today, Rosehaugh House is famous because of the 365 windows built into its walls—one for each day of the year.

Yes! the Black Isle is rich in history, as indeed is the County of Ross and Cromarty itself. In fact I believe the area it covers was mentioned by Ptolemy of Alexandria as far back as A.D. 130. He refers to three of the tribes which inhabited its five thousand square miles; and according to him I am descended from the Dekantai tribe who occupied the area on the east coast.

Here, then, amid such beautiful, historic and legendary surroundings, I was born; and I mention these facts not out of vanity, but to establish the contrast between my early environment and the career on which I later embarked. For in the practical work of a policeman, whatever his rank, there is little enough of mythology or folklore.

I suppose I should be described as a son of the soil, for my parents worked a croft of about thirty acres with some outrun, at Knockbain, and had the usual assortment of farm animals. It seems that on the day I was born a new reaper arrived which would do the work of ten men. In later years, called to help on the croft, I



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realized how important was this new reaper, and how strongly it must have competed in the family's interest with the new-born baby.

My childhood was spent under the shadow of the strict nonconformist traditions of those days—when children might just be seen but were seldom allowed to be heard. Church-going (at a kirk three miles away) and Sunday school attendance were Sabbath necessities; if one failed to keep the day holy, there would be the direst consequences. Our kirk had two services on Sunday, as lengthy as they were devout, the first in Gaelic and the second in English. Mr McLeod, the minister, was famous for his fiery exhortations from the pulpit, but I was hardly capable in those days of appreciating his great eloquence. After Church and Sunday school you were permitted to read the Bible, the *Christian Herald* or *Spurgeon's Sermons*, but woe betide you if you were caught reading the Sherlock Holmes stories which were becoming popular about that time.

My father died when I was quite young and it was left to my mother to bring up her family of three sons and one daughter. I realise now the hard struggle she must have had to rear us, for until my eldest brother was old enough to take over, it meant hiring a man to till the land and tend the croft.

After a few years at the local Knockbain school I was sent to a more pretentious establishment at Munlochry, the headmaster of which was a Major Harvey. Down the years this school produced some very distinguished scholars, among whom I do not include myself. I can only say that I passed every examination I sat for, a success which must be credited to the efficiency of the teachers who had me in their charge. It was while at this school that I became imbued with hero-worship.

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Major-General Sir Hector McDonald, K.C.B., D.S.O., a gallant soldier from the Black Isle who had joined the Army as a private and achieved a most brilliant career. Hanging on the wall at home was a calendar with a coloured picture of him, and I can remember gazing at my hero sitting astride his charger resplendent in full general's uniform. I thought then that I would like to follow his example and join the Army, but, in fact, when I left school in 1905, I found my way into a less adventurous job, becoming a clerk on the staff of the Highland Railway. I was posted to Avoch Station.

The Highland Railway ran from Perth in the south of Scotland to Wick and Thurso in the north. It had a number of branch lines, and Avoch, a fishing village of great antiquity, was one of them. When in the wars of 1297 most of the Black Isle castles were in the possession of the English, Avoch and Balconie castles were held and stoutly defended by Sir Andrew Moray (or Murray) who, in fact, died at the former castle in 1338. It is no wonder that my native countryside still has a great nostalgic attraction for me, so that I am always delighted to return there, meet old friends, and perhaps enjoy a game of golf on the fine links at Rosemarkie.

Tucked away as I was in the highlands, I knew little of London beyond having heard something about a certain 'Jack the Ripper,' who had created a reign of terror in the great city by committing a number of gruesome murders. Although suitably thrilled by the exploits of this monster, I had no yearnings to become a policeman, and Scotland Yard was but a name in my youthful mind. In fact, while I was on the staff of the Highland Railway, I must have been still under the spell of my soldier hero, Hector McDonald, for I decided to join the volunteers (as they were then called), becoming

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attached to the Seaforth Highlanders at Fortrose.

As for the railway, my first promotion came at the age of seventeen, when I was made goods clerk at Dornoch. There, in order to keep up my military training, I joined that other immortal Scots regiment, the Argyle and Sutherland Volunteers. A year later I was sent to Invergordon, a much busier station to the north of the Black Isle, and here I returned to my first love, the 4th Seaforth Highlanders—which by this time had become a Territorial unit. I can still recall the pride with which I wore the colourful uniform of the regiment, the tartan kilt and trews.

Although today the kilt is not so often worn in Scotland as it was in my early days, the sight of it, anywhere in the world, still thrills me—as indeed it does any true Scot.

It was a gay and exciting time when the Grand Fleet paid its twice-yearly visit to Invergordon and you could glimpse the might of Britain riding at anchor in the wide and spacious Firth. During the First World War, Invergordon was to attain great importance as a naval base, and the population increased at one period to a total of over 20,000. Apart from this, however, I have a special reason to cherish memories of Invergordon, for I met there the girl who became my wife. Not that there was anything romantic about our meeting: it took place at the dancing school of a Mr Campbell, who must be remembered by thousands of Scots the world over as 'Scottie the dancing master.' Among his pupils was a girl called 'Joey' Ross (her real name was Georgina) the daughter of a local building contractor. We met and fell in love, but a great deal was to happen before Joey and I were married.

During the visit of the Grand Fleet, passengers and goods traffic was very heavy on the railway, and I had

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an extremely busy time, made all the more so because we had to compete with a shipping company, whose boats came into the harbour about twice a week. They carried cargo of all kinds, including livestock, for Aberdeen, Leith and the South. There was no love lost between the Highland Railway and the shipping company, and I well remember the battle of words after an incident involving a cargo of pigs.

Among the employees of the shipping company was a casual labourer known as 'Patty Rice,' who was not very sharp of wit. Often it was his job to drive livestock from the station to the harbour for loading on to a ship. The shipping company would be informed when a number of specified beasts arrived, and Patty would be sent with some assistants to collect them and drive them to the harbour. On more than one occasion, however, the credulous Patty would go off for an alleged waggon-load of livestock, only to find on arrival that it was a leg-pull and there were no animals awaiting his attention. Patty would swear vehemently and depart.

But he had the laugh on his tormentors in one instance. Being told that a load of two dozen pigs had arrived for shipment, he decided that it was another leg-pull and simply ignored the information. It happened to be true, however, and in consequence the ship sailed without the twenty-four pigs, which were left in the waggon in the siding.

That is when the trouble began, for the animals had to be unloaded into a pen, and then fed for nearly a week until the next ship arrived, when they were duly despatched. The question then arose as to which was responsible for the muddle—the railway or the shipping company. Many letters were exchanged, acrimonious in tone, each side insisting that the cost of housing and

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feeding the animals was the responsibility of the other. And so it went on for weeks until at length the shipping company in one letter rather overstepped the bounds of discretion by criticising our lack of intelligence in thinking it was sufficient to 'tell a lunatic' of the arrival of the pigs and leave it at that. We promptly replied that if they employed a lunatic to receive the pigs on their behalf, then the responsibility for his actions was obviously theirs.

They paid the bill without further question, but—nobody ever tried to pull the leg of Patty Rice again.

I was at Invergordon until June, 1909, when I received another move—this time to Beaulieu in Inverness-shire, where I was appointed goods clerk with a further increase in salary. Just twenty years of age, I had three times received promotion, and the prospects ahead appeared promising. From this point of view, therefore, there appeared to be no reason why I should change my job.

Then it happened!

One day I read an advertisement in a Scots newspaper announcing that the London Metropolitan Police were starting a nation-wide campaign to secure suitable recruits for its ranks. Scotland was to be visited on stated dates and headquarters were to be set up in specified towns and cities where information would be supplied and recruits enrolled.

Suddenly the urge came upon me to become a London policeman.

My decision was not a popular one at home. The feeling prevailed that I was simply flinging away all my bright prospects for the mere chimera of a career. I can still see the grave expression on the local doctor's face as he tried to dissuade me.

'Don't do it, my boy,' he warned me, 'If you ~~go up~~

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there, you'll be sent to Soho and get your throat cut the first night you go on duty.'

Soho at the time meant nothing to me, but curiously enough, when I did in fact reach London as a member of the Metropolitan Police, I *was* sent to Soho. I did not, however, get my throat cut.

Before making any final decision I had, of course, to talk things over with Joey. I discussed with her the prospects for the future, and if I enlarged somewhat on the glowing possibilities which lay ahead, well—I was only repeating what I had been told by the persuasive and eloquent recruiting officer.

Joey offered every encouragement in my ambition, and so it was through all the years that followed. She stood by me and spurred me on in everything I attempted. She was a delightful companion, a guide and an anchor second to none in the world; and so she remained right up till the day of her death in 1947. The tribute I now pay her is but a small return for all the steadfast devotion she showered upon me, and the happiness she brought to me throughout our life together.

It was no small thing to uproot myself from my native Scotland to come to London. No band of pipers played me off from the station when I left, but as a departing employee of the Highland Railway Company, I was given a free return pass to London via the old Midland Railway, and the return half is still in my possession. Perhaps this might be offered as evidence for a statement you often hear made: 'Oh—Scotsmen never go back.' But don't you believe it, many of them do!

No red carpet lay on the platform when I arrived at St Pancras Station on a very wet morning in July, 1910. Never had I beheld so vast a place or one so throbbing with humanity. Never had I felt so utterly unimportant

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as at that moment when I hailed a hansom cab and asked to be driven to the Police Institute in Adam Street, Strand, the narrow street which ran down by the side of the old Tivoli Music Hall. I only spent one night there, being sent on to a section-house at Kennington. This was a sort of overflow place for Peel House, the famous training establishment for young policemen. It is there to this day, known as Peel House No. 1 (because of the second training establishment at Hendon, called Peel House No. 2).

For six weeks I underwent the usual course of training and instruction on subjects relating to crime, traffic, betting, licensing and the like. At the end of the course each recruit had to take part in what the boys called 'the Peel House drama.' It was a very simple practical exercise in which two instructors played the principal roles.

One of them (very obviously) stole a watch from the instructor playing the part of the victim, and the latter promptly chased the other man shouting at the top of his voice, 'Stop thief—stop thief!' Our job was to capture the 'crook' in turn, and then give evidence before an imaginary magistrate. Quite a good test in its way, and one that created a good deal of fun.

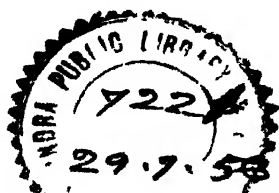
On September 5th, 1910, having been duly passed out as an efficient arm of the law, I was posted to Vine Street Police Station, situated at that time in a little back street off Piccadilly. I happened to mention the 'Peel House drama' to an elderly policeman with many years service in the West End.

He grinned derisively.

'That sort of thing never happens in real life,' he assured me.

Not long afterwards I was on duty alone in Jermyn Street when it *did* happen and in consequence I made my

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first arrest. As I travel down memory lane I can even now recall the thrill of that moment, as, patrolling my beat with measured tread, I saw a man in a lounge suit being chased by another in immaculate evening dress. The pair were followed by a crowd of people who joined in the cry of 'Stop thief.' I leaped forward and tackled the 'thief' in whose jacket pocket I found a gold dress-watch. By this time the gentleman in evening dress had reached me, puffing and blowing.

He approached me closely and whispered hoarsely in my ear, 'It's all right, constable. This man is a friend of mine and it's all a joke.'

As you can imagine, this was something of an anticlimax, shattering the fond hopes I had been nursing of a commendation for the prompt arrest of a criminal.

'I must have your names and addresses,' I said in a stern official voice, and was disconcerted again when the owner of the watch replied, 'Baron Horace de Vere Cole.' Then it was the turn of the other man, who gave his name as Oliver Locker-Lampson, a well-known Member of Parliament.

By this time the crowd surrounding me had grown to immense proportions, and a very mixed crowd it was. There were the ordinary passers-by you might expect to find around the Piccadilly district; there were news-vendors, prostitutes, hotel servants and all sorts of people. The hoax—for hoax it was—had started in the entrance to a Jermyn Street Hotel, with the result that a number of ladies and gentlemen in evening dress had followed the chase and were now awaiting developments. I was quite satisfied that the whole thing was a practical joke, and was on the point of letting the pair responsible off without further ado. The crowd did not favour  
ea, however, and began to call me very unpleasant



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names. Maybe they thought I was robbing them of the real *dénouement* of their entertainment. One peppery old gentleman in particular complained that he had chased the pair for a couple of hundred yards, much to his physical distress.

'Arrest them, constable,' he commanded, and from the way he was brandishing a malacca cane—just like a sword, I had the impression that in his day he must have led quite a few cavalry charges. I can see him now, wearing a gleaming silk 'topper' and snorting with rage.

'Move on there—move on,' I urged the crowd, but they were not to be cheated of their fun. And then—someone in the throng took a swipe with a cane at the silk hat of the voluble gentleman, cutting part of the top right off. Never have I seen a funnier sight than this elderly fire-eater, who began shouting louder than ever. There he stood amid the laughing crowd, the rim of his hat still on his head, his hair poking through in ludicrous disarray, while he belched forth curses. Quite frankly, I was at a loss what to do. I was new to police work, and anyhow my training at Peel House had not foreseen such an unusual combination of circumstances.

Fortunately for me a more experienced policeman came along, and I told him what had happened. He cocked a reproving eye at the two men who had started it all, and said, 'These gentlemen have behaved in a manner likely to cause a breach of the peace, and must be arrested.'

They were—one by him and the other by me! Off we trundled them to Vine Street, where they were duly charged and released on bail. The next morning at Marlborough Police Court they were fined 2s. 6d. each. So ended my first case.

I did not know until later that Horace de Vere

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who died in 1936 and was a brother of Mrs Neville Chamberlain, was one of the most notorious practical jokers of this century. On one occasion he and a friend roped off part of a busy West End street and then got workmen to dig up the roadway as though carrying out repairs. On another, he went to Cambridge University bedecked in all the colourful robes and glittering gems of the East, accompanied by his 'suite' and posing as the Sultan of Zanzibar. College and civic authorities gave him a suitably elaborate official welcome. Later on—as Prince of Abyssinia this time—attended by a retinue of 'coloured' officials of the royal court, he inspected a British battleship. The stunts of the students today, who hang chamber-pots on the spires of public buildings, pale into insignificance beside those of that prince of hoaxers, *de Vere Cole*.

The two and a half years I spent in uniform patrolling the West End of London gave me a wide and varied experience of life in all its phases. London was at that time a gay city indeed—and a lively one. The suffragettes were then at the very height of their militant campaign. Scarcely a day passed without our being called out to detach one or other of them from the railing of an opposing politician's house, to which she had either padlocked or handcuffed herself. I recall the day when some fifty or sixty of these militant ladies smashed all the shop windows in Bond Street in a playful effort to call attention to their demand for the vote. They exercised a strategy and resource which would do credit to many an army general, and they kept us continually on our toes.

It was not long after being posted to Vine Street that I felt a bit seedy. Being a braw Scot, I didn't like the idea of going sick, but as I became steadily worse I was

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forced to visit the Divisional Surgeon. 'You've got a cold,' was all he said, and gave me a bottle of brown fluid. It was a case of 'medicine and duty.'

That same night, while on my beat, I collapsed in the street. A kindly sergeant found me and took me back to the section-house in Charing Cross Road where I lived, and ordered me to bed.

About 6.30 in the morning the occupant of the next cubicle to mine came in to see why I had come off duty earlier than I should have done, i.e. 6 a.m. He had been in the Marines and was a bright and breezy sort of fellow, typical of the Navy. I explained how I had collapsed on the beat and been brought back by the sergeant.

He gazed down at me with disconcerting gloom.

'Blimey, Brigham,' he murmured, 'you're dying, I must get you some rum.'

I must explain that in those days all Youngs in the police force were nicknamed 'Brigham,' after Brigham Young, the famous mormon; mormonism and polygamy was much in the news at that time.

At that particular moment the very thought of rum nauseated me, and I told my nautical friend so; but in his view rum was the panacea for all ills.

'It'll put you on your feet in no time,' he insisted, and off he went to one of the pubs in Covent Garden, which opened early to assuage the thirst of market porters. He was soon back with a bottle—not of rum but of port, and a dozen oranges. I never learned the reason for his switch from rum to port, but he poured out a hefty 'dose' of the wine.

'Get this down you, son, and you'll soon feel like a fighting-cock,' he assured me, and I took his word for it.

He was a bit out in his prophecy, however, for within

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a couple of hours I was covered from head to foot with spots, and the hastily summoned Divisional Surgeon decided that I had got measles. In double-quick time I was on my way to the Islington Fever Hospital, where I later learned that for a time I was nearly 'out for the count.' They pulled me through, however, and I had a very pleasant time there, although as soon as I felt a bit better I was anxious to get back on the beat again.

It was about the time of the Houndsditch murders, in the winter of 1910-11, when 'Peter the Painter' and his gang of anarchists shot dead three policemen during the famous siege of Sidney Street. I remember the hospital doctor replying to my plea to be discharged, 'You stay where you are, my boy, you don't want to go out and be shot.' By the time I did return to duty, the gang had all been rounded up, with the exception of 'Peter the Painter,' who managed to escape abroad.

I had many amusing experiences during those early days in uniform. When, for instance, someone reported having seen a man on the roof of a building near some flats between the Garrick Theatre and St Martin's Lane, I was sent there with a sergeant to investigate, and it was not long before we spotted an open window. 'He may have got through there,' said the sergeant. 'Come on.'

I was full of excitement and enjoying every minute of it. The window was rather a wide one, the bottom half of which seemed to be pushed right up. Together we scrambled through only to hear an indignant bellow as we landed on top of two people in bed. They were evidently believers in the fresh air theory.

'What the devil are you doing, Rachel,' demanded a man's angry voice.

'Nothing,' came the reply. 'What are you up to?'

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During the next few minutes the sergeant attempted to explain our unusual mode of entry to a short tubby man with a stubby beard, who was wearing a long white nightshirt. Having placated this vision, we searched the place well and truly, and eventually a man was caught—but not by us. Another policeman had the good fortune to nab the burglar, who had been interrupted in his operations by our bold, if fruitless entry.

I have happy, if hectic, memories of 'Boat-race Night' in the West End, and of the medical student 'rags' intended to raise money for charity.

The Oxford and Cambridge boys certainly went to town once the race was over. Although they sometimes did real damage, we were usually very tolerant of them, and turned many a blind eye to their exploits, which we looked on as being due to an excess of high spirits. It often seemed to me, however, that these young bloods came to London for the sole purpose of being locked up in a police cell for the night. It was part and parcel of their tradition that they could boast of having been arrested on Boat-race Night, and they evidently lost caste if they did not achieve their ambition. Behold them, then—perhaps fifty or sixty of them—all bundled into one very large cell at Vine Street, where they caused the utmost pandemonium by singing all the popular songs of the day at the top of their voices. I remember some of them making impassioned proposals of marriage to an elderly and portly matron who had to pass and repass their window.

During a rag by medical students, one of the latter appeared on the scene dressed in a pair of very wide overall trousers and a very loose jacket of the same material, a sort of mackintosh stuff like that of an anti-gas outfit; both trousers and jacket were bright yellow.

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In his hand he carried a stick with a balloon at the end of it. He was waving this about in a provocative manner, and when a policeman remonstrated with him, he promptly knocked his helmet off, and then commenced to beat it down the street. The constable gave chase, caught up with his quarry and grabbed him in a sort of rugger tackle. The student wriggled himself through the wide legs of his trousers and dashed down a side-street. This time the policeman did not try to follow him, but gazed down on his uniform with a rueful grin. Both trousers and jacket had been heavily coated with yellow paint, still wet, and the constable presented a sorry sight as he made his way to the police station to change into another uniform.

Policemen may have to suffer other indignities at times—like the day the station sergeant in charge of the section-house called me in when I was off duty. He explained that one of the 'barrow boys' of that day had been arrested for obstruction outside the National Portrait Gallery, and that his barrow needed moving.

'Just run down and push the barrow up to Vine Street,' he ordered.

I did not relish the job at all, but orders had to be obeyed, so I made my way to where the barrow with its load of fruit stood unattended, and began to push it along Pall Mall towards Piccadilly. I probably looked the part of a costermonger clad in old jacket and cap, for on the way I was stopped by several people who wanted to buy my wares.

'Not for sale,' I told them gruffly, and stalked on.

The barrow was heavy, and as I passed up Lower Regent Street I paused for a rest. To my chagrin there approached a gentleman in all the glory of full morning dress.

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He looked the stall over with selective eyes and then, pointing to some choice William pears, said, 'A pound of pears, please.'

'Not for sale,' I brusquely replied, and prepared to move on.

'I want a pound of those pears,' he demanded somewhat angrily.

'They are not for sale,' I answered once more, deciding that the sooner I got rid of the barrow the sooner I should be delivered from my tormentors. But the would-be customer was not having it.

'What do you mean, "Not for sale"—when you are parading your barrow through the streets?' he asked. Very bluntly I told him that I was just wheeling the barrow to the police station, whereat he left me with the memorable remark: 'Young man, always remember that courtesy costs nothing and buys everything.'

Naturally I had the usual arrests of the drunk and disorderly and of those guilty of minor offences; but all the time I was steeping myself in police lore, for I was anxious to make my way, so that I could marry Joey and get her down with me in London.

In 1911 I was one of the policemen who lined the route at the Coronation of King George V, and as I stood there watching the procession go by, I had no idea that in after years I should be called upon to do duty at two further Coronations—that of his son, George VI, in 1937, and of his grand-daughter, our present Queen, in 1953. There are, I believe, only two officers in the Metropolitan Police Force who did duty at three successive Coronations, ex-Commander Quincey and myself.

At last the opportunity came for which all young policemen in the Metropolitan Police are longing: I was posted to the C.I.D. at New Scotland Yard. In the year

### *A Scot Comes South*

1913 I said good bye to my career as a uniform officer and went to take up my appointment at the Yard.

I was a Detective Constable in rank, and on many occasions had to go into the room occupied by Sir Melville McNaughton, the then Assistant Commissioner of the Criminal Investigation Department.

It never occurred to me then, that I might one day become the occupant of that same room, or that some thirty years later I should sit in the same chair, having been appointed Deputy Assistant Commissioner, later renamed Commander C.I.D.



## CHAPTER TWO

### ORIGIN OF THE C.I.D.

**W**HEN I FIRST WENT to the Yard, the Commissioner in charge of the Metropolitan Police was that great gentleman Sir Edward Henry, G.C.V.O., K.C.B., C.S.I., whose classification of fingerprints for purposes of identification has proved to be one of the greatest contributions to scientific crime detection in the history of the world. I have served under seven Commissioners since I made my entry into Scotland Yard, including Sir John Nott Bower, K.C.V.O., who held the office when I retired in January, 1954.

Scotland Yard! The very name conjures up visions of murder, mystery and crime; of great detectives, past and present, whose names throughout the years became household words and whose feats of crime detection will live in criminal history.

Throughout my spell as a police constable, pounding my beat in the West End of London, I had often watched the plain-clothes men of the C.I.D. venture forth from Vine Street Police Station to embark on their investigations. Sometimes, as part of my training, I attended Marlborough Street or Bow Street Police Courts to observe how they presented a case before the magistrate and note the proper way in which to give one's evidence.

When, therefore, the opportunity presented itself for me to become one of them, and I was posted to the Yard, I felt that I had indeed arrived. There was some-

## *Origin of the C.I.D.*

thing lyrical about the sound of my new rank—Detective Constable: a rhythmic lilt, pleasing to the ear. I was appointed to the C.I.D. Registry, which was quite separate from other Registries at the Yard, being used exclusively in connection with the administration of the C.I.D. But although perhaps the least spectacular of any of the various departments, it was by no means the least important. In fact I found my work full of interest. Largely clerical, it dealt with the sorting of correspondence and reports, ensuring that all 'case papers' and documents were in correct form for submission to the chiefs.

The documents included all the statements taken from prisoners and witnesses, together with the reports of the police officers engaged on the various cases and investigations of the day. I can still call to mind the thrill I experienced when the 'case papers' connected with the notorious 'Brides in the Bath' murders passed through my hands. I was able to read at first-hand all the sensational details of the crimes for which George Joseph Smith was subsequently tried and hanged.

My service in this department was to prove invaluable to me in later years when I went out to conduct my own investigations into all sorts of crimes. It provided me with a fund of knowledge as to the value of painstaking routine work. I could not help but realise the importance of method and system in the collation of documents so that one could lay their hands on them at a moment's notice; I learned the correct official way to make a report on one's enquiries, for was I not reading the reports of the greatest detectives of that day—men whose names were household words in circles connected with crime and its detection?

It was during these early days, too, that I began to

## *Early Days in the Police*

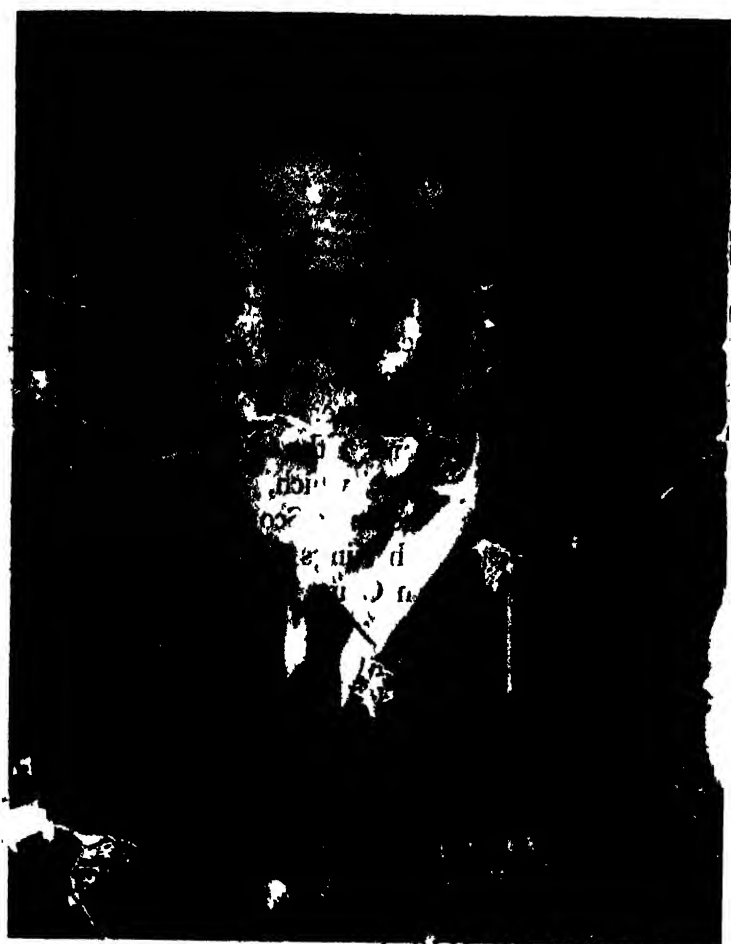
realise the close and important relationship which exists between Scotland Yard, our Provincial police and the police forces throughout the world.

All the time I was absorbing the atmosphere of my surroundings, getting to know something of the history of this organisation, of which I had become a part. What a fascinating history it is: even the name of the site on which now stands the Headquarters of the Metropolitan Police Force has a romantic origin. Scotland Yard! How did it come by this name?

Centuries ago, in a yard at the Charing Cross end of Whitehall, stood a palace. According to Stow, writing in 1598, it was known as Scotland because it was the house of the Scottish Kings and Queens whenever they visited the English King at the Royal Palace of Westminster. Stow states that this place had been there since the Norman Conquest, so that the susceptibilities of the Scots should not be offended, the site upon which the palace stood was known as Scotland Yard, and was actually declared to be a part of Scotland and not a possession of the English monarch. This is similar to the accepted diplomatic immunity attached to foreign embassies at the present time: they are recognised as a part of the country they represent.

It was not until 1533 that Cardinal Wolsey succeeded in acquiring the palace, which had formerly belonged to the King of Scotland, for the purpose of enlarging the Archbishopric of York.

In 1662 the first 'Improvement of Police' Commission for London and Westminster was set up, and Scotland Yard. Even then, the most important part of the time was one of the most important parts of the time. In Scotland Yard, at that





A student taking his oral examination before the Superintendent. (The left and some of the other members of the board of



## Origin of the C.I.D.

duties were simpler than are those of the Commissioner at New Scotland Yard today, although they had one similar problem to face—a *traffic* problem! Less complex, perhaps, than that which exercises us today, for it dealt not with a surplus of cars and vehicles but with the cluttered by hundreds of pigs which wandered about the creak-ridden streets.

Then, in the early 1700's, there appeared a man who is generally regarded as the origin of the detection in the C.I.D. sense.

This was Thomas De Witt, son of a French protestant refugee and a native of an opportunist. He, too, had his office in Scotland Yard, from which he carried on a brisk business, acting as agent for men of wealth or position who wanted an official to gain some favour from a particular government department. His services in this respect naturally endeared him to those for whom he acted, and by thus 'getting in with the right people, he was made a Justice of the Peace and so came to Bow Street, setting up the first court to be held in that area, and becoming the first permanent magistrate at Bow Street. His methods of bringing book and administering justice would not be of much interest to us today, for he indulged in what was called 'trading justice.' In his day, and in those days, those who were fortunate enough to have a case brought to pay his charges. Thomas De Witt was to save the world from the exploits of Jonathan Wild. The Veil did not, like Wild, or his gangs of thieves, to carry out thefts and robberies, but he, like his thieves and victims, was a man of the law. In fact, often arranged a deal between in obtaining the plunder, or restoring the victim on payment of

### *Early Days in the Police*

a fee for his services. Either way he was well in on the transaction.

De Veil was simply detective and judge combined. He not only caught the thief, he also tried him in his own office at Bow Street, which became a court for the occasion. He was absolutely fearless, as became a gallant soldier who had fought with Marlborough and attained the rank of Colonel. He went out after the crime gangs of his day with infinite courage and resource. He led several raids upon them in person, breaking up the gangs and bringing their members to justice. He might be called the leader of the eighteenth-century Flying Squad.

When De Veil was succeeded at Bow Street by Henry Fielding, the great novelist, another link was forged in the history of the Criminal Investigation Department and its connection with Scotland Yard. At that time the streets of London were infested by robbers and pick-pockets of the most violent kind, and our great city was a place of squalid courts and fetid slums where poverty was rife and crime rampant. Parliament was greatly disturbed by the lawlessness which prevailed, and welcomed Henry Fielding's plan to form a force of constables who, after serving their time as parish constables, would concentrate entirely on crime detection and the apprehension of criminals.

Fielding's men became known as 'thief-takers,' and as this name suggested 'informers,' they were as little liked by the populace as the 'copper's nark' of recent times is unpopular in criminal circles. For London was a seething underworld in the days of Fielding, and it is recorded that when he made a raid upon two slum dwellings in Shoreditch, he found nearly a hundred men, women, and children crowded into the filthy, reeking

## *Origin of the C.I.D.*

rooms; among them were children of five and six years of age who had been taught the nimble art of pocket-picking, while those of even more tender years were expert in keeping watch while their parents stole a purse or watch.

At first these 'thief-takers' were small in number—some seven in all; but their courage, determination and resource in obtaining information was such that they succeeded in breaking up the gangs of criminals who had hitherto enjoyed a much too frequent immunity from arrest. For example, should a highwayman or robber commit a violent hold-up, even in broad daylight, he could in most cases ride openly through the streets without fear of being arrested. In the event of chase being given, there were always a dozen or more armed desperadoes ready to come to his rescue. It was against this sort of law-breaking that Henry Fielding waged his unceasing warfare, and it speaks well for his plan that it did not cost the Government of that day more than £300.

The good work was carried on after his death in 1754 by his blind half-brother, Sir John Fielding, who succeeded him as magistrate at Bow Street. Sir John took over the little band of detectives, displaying the same personal interest in their work, visiting the actual scenes of crime, and encouraging his men to round up the wrongdoers.

How often have I uttered the words, 'From information received I proceeded to such and such a place, etc., etc.!' That is precisely what the Fielding patrols did. On 'information received' they 'proceeded' to the scene of a crime, sought information on the spot and then pursued their enquiries. In time they were given a distinguishing uniform, a very gay affair with a 'robin



## *Early Days in the Police*

redbreast' waistcoat, and a badge of office consisting of a small baton surmounted by a gilt crown. They gave their whole time to crime detection, and became known as Bow Street Runners. From their previous service they were familiar with police duties, and Sir John Fielding described them as 'a number of approved and reputable men always ready to pursue daring offenders on notice being given of any robbery, outrage, or other villainies.'

The Bow Street Runners were the forerunners of our present C.I.D., being detectives purely and simply; other police duties were carried out by the Foot Patrol and the Mounted Patrol. The Runners were the first real detective force to be inaugurated, and if their efforts were not always above suspicion—Dickens certainly had his doubts—they filled a long-felt need in the society of that earlier day. They were required to possess powers of observation and the ability to spot a line of investigation in much the same way as detectives of today.

Changing times brought about the need for a reconstruction of our police system, and in 1829 Sir Robert Peel carried his Bill for the Improvement of the Metropolitan Police through both Houses of Parliament. In September of that year the first thousand recruits to the 'Peelers,' as they became known after their founder, set out on their first patrols. That popular feeling ran high against them stands out in stern contrast to the respect with which our police are regarded today. Although smartly uniformed in blue swallow-tail coats and top hats, during those early days they were mobbed by contemptuous crowds who greeted them with cries of 'Blue-devils.'

But what of the Bow Street Runners?

Well—the new Metropolitan Police Force replaced

### *Origin of the C.I.D.*

the foot patrols, together with all the parish constables and other guardians of the peace operating throughout the Metropolitan area, except for the City of London Police. The Runners were not included in the new body, but for ten more years they carried on independently, with fewer and fewer calls upon their services, until in 1839 they ceased to operate altogether, apart from a few isolated cases as private enquiry agents.

Meanwhile the headquarters of the new Force had been established at 4 Whitehall Place. A police station was conveniently placed at the back of these offices, in Scotland Yard: that same Yard where once had proudly stood the palace of the Scottish Kings and Queens.

It now became the duty of the new police force to investigate a crime immediately it had been committed, irrespective of whether anybody came forward to prosecute and bear the cost of enquiry. There was no detective branch of the new Force as such, and no C.I.D. existed between the years 1839, when the Bow Street Runners ceased official existence, and 1842.

In that year, the Commissioners deemed it desirable to inaugurate a small though special detective branch; to this end they approached Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, seeking his permission to form a body of men who would specialise in running criminals to earth. Reluctantly Sir James consented, and eight officers were duly enrolled consisting of two inspectors and six sergeants of police, all drawn from the uniform branches. Their office was in Scotland Yard and they attracted the attention of Charles Dickens, who not only entertained them at the editorial offices of *Household Words*, of which he was the editor, but embodied them in the character of 'Inspector Bucket,' the detective in *Bleak House*. In addition he ran a series of articles in his journal on 'The

### *Early Days in the Police*

Modern Science of Thief Taking,' in which he eulogised the embryo C.I.D. of *Old* Scotland Yard—the significance of the word 'Old' will appear later on. It is interesting how early the activities of the police in general and detectives in particular have been associated with Scotland Yard, for long before 1842 the 'Peelers' and their headquarters were mentioned in official documents and the Press as being at Scotland Yard, and it was from those headquarters that the new detective branch set forth on its investigations into crimes of every kind.

That they concentrated largely on important enquiries within the Metropolitan area is not surprising, for being so few in number they had more than enough to do. Nor was their strength increased until 1864, while even in 1868, when the new police totalled round about 8,000, there were only fifteen members of this infant detective force, which had a hard struggle in order to survive.

It *did* survive, however, in spite of many buffetings and setbacks. Efforts were made to add to its numbers, but somehow met with strenuous opposition. In the year 1877 a scandal occurred in which three senior inspectors, leading lights of the new detective force, were eventually convicted at the Old Bailey for conspiracy with a gang of swindlers; the head of the gang was Harry Benson, one of the most notorious 'turf' fraudsters in the annals of crime.

In a way the disquieting disclosures made during the trial of Benson and his confederates did the police a great service. It aroused tremendous public interest, and stimulated the authorities to appoint a Committee of Enquiry into the organisation of the detective force at Scotland Yard. The department was rigorously overhauled, and in 1878 the Committee recommended that the Metro-

### *Origin of the C.I.D.*

politan Police should have a detective force the members of which would be under the command of an Assistant Commissioner who had experience as a lawyer and a magistrate.

This recommendation was accepted, and thus was born the Criminal Investigation Department as we know it today. A young barrister, Mr Howard Vincent (later Sir Howard Vincent, M.P.), was appointed to take charge of this new detective department, not as Assistant Commissioner, but with the grandiose title of Director of Criminal Investigation. Six years later that office was abolished in favour of the rank of Assistant Commissioner, as recommended by the Committee.

As the Metropolitan Police Force grew in numbers, so did its staff increase, with the result that the quarters in Old Scotland Yard became too small to hold its members, who overflowed into the surrounding houses. Even so, there was not enough room, and the Commissioners decided that it was time to move to some less congested quarters.

In 1885 they purchased the site on which stands the Scotland Yard of today. At one time it was proposed to erect a State opera house on the spot, and the then Duke of Edinburgh had even laid a foundation stone to launch the project. For some reason the scheme fell through, and in 1885 preparations began for the erection of *New* Scotland Yard. In 1890 all the new police departments were transferred from Old Scotland Yard to the rather dignified turreted building in the Scottish Baronial style, which has been the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police ever since.

It is perhaps appropriate, if ironical, that the thousands of tons of granite used in its construction was hewn by convict labour from the quarries at Dartmoor, the most

### *Early Days in the Police*

sinister of all penal establishments—to which Scotland Yard detectives have probably been responsible for sending more prisoners than has any other police force in the country.

Since that day other buildings have been erected on adjacent spots to house the ever-growing number of men and women police engaged in the war against crime, and the demand for still more room continues. So does the demand for police; in my view about 24,000 are needed to police Greater London.

Here, then, in this historic building, I served my apprenticeship in the science of crime prevention and detection, for that is the double object of every police officer, whether he be in the uniform or plain-clothes branch of the service.

When I first arrived in the department my chief was one, Albert Edward Lawrence, an extremely efficient officer and a man of sterling character; in his off-duty hours he was an active licensed lay reader of the Church of England at St Mary's Church, Acton.

My foot was on the first rung of the ladder I had set myself to climb: I was a member of the C.I.D. I was only a modest member in a clerical capacity, with no active part in the catching of criminals, but still I was a C.I.D. man. My time in this Department was cut short by the outbreak of the First World War. I volunteered for 'outside duty' and after a short period in Central Office applied for and obtained a transfer to Acton on 'X' Division.

Like most young men of that day I could not resist the voices of the patriotic ladies who declared in song that although they 'didn't want to lose us' they 'thought we ought to go.' I volunteered for the Army; but there was such a grave shortage in the police at the time that I

### *Origin of the C.I.D.*

was told I could not be released. From time to time I made several other attempts to enlist, but it was not until January 18th, 1917, that I succeeded in joining the 2nd Battalion Artists' Rifles. Later on I got a commission with the Rifle Brigade, and it was then that I received the following letter from my fellow police officers of 'X' Division, signed by John Reid, the Divisional Detective Inspector at Harrow Road Police Station.

Dear Mr Young,

It is the desire of your comrades in the Criminal Investigation Department to present you with a Rifle Brigade Sword suitably inscribed to show our high appreciation of you as a Detective Officer, and of the example you have shown to others in volunteering for the Army, notwithstanding that your position exempted you from such . . .

I went out to France with the Rifle Brigade, but was unlucky enough to be taken prisoner in 1918. I returned to England after the Armistice, being demobilised in March, 1919. While I was on leave after saying farewell to the Army, Joey and I decided to get married. There was no reason for any further delay. The war was over, I had established myself with the C.I.D., and was in a position to support a wife.

The wedding took place at Dingwall, and on April 2nd, 1919, I rejoined the Metropolitan Police Force as a married man and was stationed at Acton. Within a few months of my return to duty I was made Detective Sergeant. It was just three days before Christmas that I received my promotion, and no better Christmas box ever came my way.

I remained at Acton and was sent out on occasions to conduct my own investigations into crimes. They were

### *Early Days in the Police*

not very startling crimes, nor such as to make the headlines, but provided useful opportunities to apply whatever detective qualities I possessed. Every now and then there were some unusual variations in the crimes, such as the occasion when I was sent out to investigate the theft of a road. It sounds funny, I know, and both I and an inspector of 'X' Division thought it funny when he instructed me. 'Go along and see what you make of it,' plainly thinking it as peculiar as I did.

One evening an immaculately dressed gentleman had entered the station and complained that 'someone has stolen the road outside my place of business.' The inspector sat up and looked at the man, who appeared to be perfectly serious. As strange callers with curious complaints often visit police stations, he decided the man was probably a little queer in the head. The inspector was very busy, as most inspectors are at that time of day, attending to charges and a variety of other routine duties, and the interview was somewhat brief. He jotted down the name and address of the visitor and smilingly told him that he would send someone round to investigate.

The next morning when I arrived at the station he handed me the note he had made, and, tapping his head significantly, remarked: 'I think he's nuts, but if you happen to be going near the address, give him a call and see what it's all about.'

The address, I found, was that of a large and imposing factory, at the door of which stood a large and imposing commissionaire. I asked the latter whether a Mr D. was there, and he said, 'Oh, yes, Sir, have you an appointment?'

I explained that Mr D. had called the previous day and I had come in response to that call.

At once I was shown through a long and well-

### *Origin of the C.I.D.*

appointed corridor to a luxuriously furnished office, where I was ushered into the presence of the very smart and intelligent manager of this thriving organisation. I soon became aware that Mr D. was by no means suffering from delusions, but that the theft which he had reported was of a very serious nature. Someone *had* stolen a road.

The land on the north side of the factory belonged to his firm, and the road in front of it had been extended for the purpose of building an addition to the factory on the ground opposite the existing building. In building the road between, kerbing and channelling of Aberdeen granite had been laid complete with drains and grating, costing some £500. Shortly after the outbreak of war in 1914, the land, including the said road, had been taken over for a military camp, which consisted of the usual kind of huts with concrete foundations. A corrugated iron fence was put round the camp, and the road, which was out of sight, was soon covered with grass. When the war ended, the site was handed over to the Disposal and Liquidation Board for the purpose of selling the huts and foundations, etc.

Such was the history of this matter when I embarked on my investigation. By that time the land was under the control of a department whose job was to restore the land, etc., as found; or at any rate as near as possible to its original state when taken over. Nobody seemed to know anything about the road until I began to make my enquiries, by which time things were extremely involved.

When the concrete foundations were sold, a man with a sharp eye for business had apparently spotted the road with its valuable granite kerbing and channelling and promptly excavated the lot, together with the drain gratings. He sold the whole issue to a contractor who



### *Early Days in the Police*

was building an Avenue in the vicinity. The road, therefore, *bad* vanished, and Mr D. had some justification for reporting that it had been 'stolen.'

It was an intriguing story I unearthed as I pursued my investigation. The man who had removed the kerbing had arrived with a Foden steam waggon, dug up the precious granite, loaded it all on to the waggon, and driven off with his booty. If he had dug up the kerbing stones and stacked them, or even left them lying on the ground (abandoned is the legal term) and then returned later to load them on to his waggon, it would have constituted a criminal offence. Without expert legal advice I thought on the face of it that larceny had been committed, for the kerbing stones were *not* the property of the man who had taken them away and sold them.

It was my intention to charge this man with the theft, but when I put the position before that distinguished lawyer, Sir Archibald Bodkin, the then Director of Public Prosecutions, he shook his head, as he explained to me the anomaly of the law on this point.

'You cannot sustain a charge of larceny,' he informed me, 'for this reason. Here we have something attaching to the realty (the earth) and such things are in law only capable of being stolen if, after severance, the property is abandoned, even though only temporarily.'

Now the man who had taken and sold the kerbing stones had not 'abandoned' them even temporarily; he had dug them up and loaded them immediately on to his waggon, and hence, in law, he had committed no offence. Never before had I come up against this interesting legal point, nor have I known a similar case since that day; but I remember with amusement one of Sir Archibald's remarks: 'You cannot walk up and steal a house,' he said, 'because it is part of the realty.'

### *Origin of the C.I.D.*

A charge of wilful damage might succeed, he agreed, but it was then my turn to explain that I was finding it hard to get any of the departments concerned to take any responsibility. At the same time the original owner was demanding some action and wanted to know what we were 'doing about it.'

Sir Archibald suggested that the most appropriate step would be for the contractor who had purchased the stones to take proceedings against the 'thief' for false pretences, on the ground that he had represented the stones as being his property to sell. But here again I struck a snag. The contractor was a very busy man, engaged at the time in constructing London's Western Avenue running westward from Shepherd's Bush. He was being urged to hurry up with the job, and could not spare the time to take action.

So the road-stealer got away with it. The contractor, however, after I had had a talk with him and explained the position, offered quite voluntarily to replace the missing road. Thus everyone was satisfied, and I was able to write *finis* to what had turned out to be a lengthy and complicated enquiry.

In fairness to the departments concerned, I should mention that the greatly increased war staffs employed, many of them only temporarily engaged, were then in process of demobilisation, so that a missing road here or there may not have seemed of much importance, whatever the headaches it might cause to the odd detective-sergeant.

For the most part, of course, my work was routine enough, and in this unobtrusive way I began the long association with Scotland Yard, where I spent some forty odd years of my life. Now, at the end of that time, having seen our police, as it were from below deck, as a

### *Early Days in the Police*

constable, and having also viewed them from the bridge as Commander C.I.D., I feel I can say that the Metropolitan Police Force in all its branches is a fine body of men—and women—excelled by no other police force in the world. Nor, having had a close and intimate association with police forces throughout the country over many years, have I any hesitation in saying the same of them.

## CHAPTER THREE

### INSIDE SCOTLAND YARD

**M**Y ENTHUSIASM ABOUT the police and the C.I.D. is not always shared, of course, by the Press, and even less by the average writer of detective stories. Sometimes, it is true, the Scotland Yard man of fiction seems endowed with such uncanny skill to unravel the darkest and most obstinate of mysteries that the real-life officer might well gasp with envy. More often, however, a baffled Yard with all its vast resources is obliged to summon to its aid the brilliant amateur, a character of extreme ingenuity and subtlety of reasoning.

The prototype, of course, was good old Sherlock; and although no longer quite such a Holmes 'fan,' I can still read with pleasure the exploits of the famous detective. I fear, however, that if he had had to operate in these days of acid-bath murders, mailbag robberies planned to the second, and smash-and-grab raids assisted by high-powered cars—the great Holmes, departing methodically for the scene of the crime in the modern equivalent of a hansom, would have found himself a long way behind. As for his 'dear Watson,' the good doctor's *naïveté* and slowness, instead of providing a foil for Holmes' extraordinary abilities, would have held up rather badly the subsequent investigations.

Yes, I am fond of a good detective yarn, and we can 'take it,' even when the professional detective is shown as a half-wit who couldn't catch a cold with his shirt

## *Early Days in the Police*

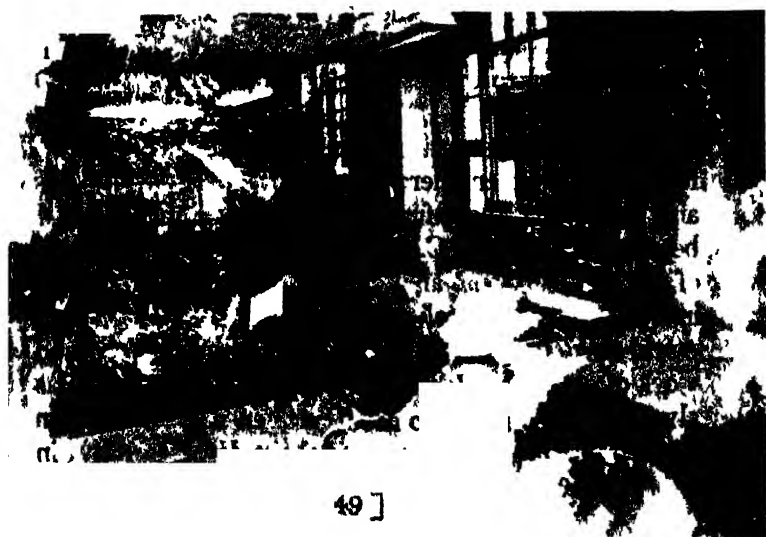
off. 'All that may be conceded to 'literary licence,' but naturally the facts are very different. Neither imbeciles nor supermen, C.I.D. detectives are ordinary human beings, with no occult powers of divination, who must, however, possess such qualities as common sense, patience, training, experience, industry—and the ability to concentrate these qualities on the particular problem they are called on to solve. In many respects, like its methods usually are, the C.I.D. justifies itself by the most stringent and exacting standards.

The secret behind this success is not only teamwork: a complete co-ordination of the staff and knowledge of every highly efficient man in every branch of the organisation. If the chief of each department likes to think *his* department is the most important one, well—let him go on thinking so, that is the very enthusiasm which should inspire every man to take pride in his job. And in a way this is the secret of the C.I.D. is second to none in its efficiency. It is when it comes to solving a crime, the forces of every department fit one into the other like the pieces in a jigsaw puzzle, the combined skills of the entire organisation being directed to one object—bringing the criminal to book.

I can best illustrate what I mean, perhaps by the following chart enumerating the various departments and describing their functions, which I made after I became Commander C.I.D. This chart graced the wall of my room at the Yard, and was a constant source of interest to visitors, who came from all over the world to gain information and knowledge of the structure and work of our ~~Investigation~~ Investigation Department. It was always a pleasure to show these men and show them over the Yard. ~~about~~ about detective work



17 JIM SCOTT'S DAY  
 1964 - 1965





## *Inside Scotland Yard*

general and exchange views on the best way of combating crime; for this purpose my chart was invaluable and I used to call it my bird's-eye view of the C.I.D.

At the top of this family tree, as it were, is the Assistant Commissioner in charge. Immediately below, the name of the Commander appears as Deputy to the Assistant Commissioner. There follow the Deputy Commanders and Chief Superintendents, in command of the four Districts into which the Metropolitan Police Area is divided

The authorised strength of the Force is 20,000 men, who are responsible for policing an area of approximately 700 square miles within a radius of about 15 miles from Charing Cross. Seeing that the population of this area is over 8,000,000, a police force of about 1 in 400 is by

excessive to carry out its manifold duties day, year in year out. The four Districts are divided into twenty-two Divisions, which does not include the Training Division and the Division policing the Parks. The Divisions are again split up into sections with a number of Police Stations on each. The stations are attached to nearly all Police Divisions under the charge of a Superintendent C.I.D. stationed at Divisional Headquarters.

Each of the four Districts has its own area to police and has each Department its own particular sphere of activity. C.I., for example, previously known as Criminal Investigation Office, is a very important department, dealing with the more serious crimes both inside and outside the Metropolitan Police area. When they occur outside the area, a murder, say, in the Midlands or the North, will meet again that sentence beloved of the newspapers. 'Scotland Yard has been called in' and Scotland Yard does not venture out.



### *Early Days in the Police*

politan area unless the Chief Constable of the particular Force concerned in the investigations applies to the Yard for assistance. Then, a Superintendent is despatched to the scene of the crime accompanied by a First-Class Detective Sergeant to *assist* the local police in their enquiries. In effect the Yard takes on the investigations, but always with the friendly and invaluable help of the men on the spot.

C.1. also carries out enquiries on behalf of the Director of Public Prosecutions when complaints have been made concerning the criminal activities of some person or persons; it deals with cases of extradition and fugitive offenders, investigates cases of fraud, forgery, smash-and-grab raids, etc., and with international crime in cases where linguistic knowledge is required.

C.2, more popularly known as 'Correspondence,' is the department to which I was posted from the uniform branch in 1919; I have already stressed the importance of its work in maintaining the smooth running of the whole organisation, by seeing that officers in command of each department get their respective documents, correspondence and case papers without delay.

C.3, is a very highly specialised department combining Fingerprints and Photography. Experts from these branches visit the scene of crime to take photographs of bodies or articles, and examine for fingerprints. If any are found, they are classified, and a careful search is made for duplicate prints among those contained in the filed records of convicted prisoners. If necessary, the photographer makes photographic enlargements for use as exhibits in Court at any subsequent trial. The tremendous part played by this department in the detection of crime can be gauged by the fact that there are about 500,000 sets of fingerprints at the Yard Bureau, all

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of them filed so that a search can be made in a matter of minutes. C.3, also have a great many scientific appliances for bringing to light a fingerprint invisible to the naked eye. They use infra-red and ultra-violet photography, high-pressure mercury lamps, and a wide variety of methods for detecting erasures on documents such as forged wills, the indentations made by a jemmy on a window-frame, by which the tool used might be identified, and a hundred other little aids calculated to bring about the downfall of the crook.

C.4, the Criminal Record Office, is of world-wide importance in the campaign against crime. As its name suggests, this department is responsible for keeping the records of all the convicted criminals in the country, together with details of the crimes they have committed. The exhaustive indices of C.R.O., with its many cross-references, are available not only to the Metropolitan Police, but to all Provincial Police Forces and to every police force throughout the world. It is the most comprehensive record of crime and criminals imaginable. Not only are the names of the criminals recorded, but their aliases, nicknames, any peculiarities of appearance, gestures, walk and speech, any deformities by which they might more easily be recognised, the nature of the crimes they usually commit, and their usual methods of committing them.

C.R.O. also keeps an elaborate index of all property reported stolen. This makes it easy, if someone is arrested and certain property found in his or her possession, to check on whether or not it is stolen property. Another of C.R.O.'s functions is to publish the *Police Gazette* and its supplements, such as Informations, Lists to Pawnbrokers, and particulars of criminals who may be wanted or are at present in custody.

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C.5 is chiefly an administrative department, dealing with C.I.D. Establishment, Promotions and Commendations, and questions concerning the organisation and administration of the Force, and any complaints made against C.I.D. officers.

C.6 is another specialist department concentrating on crimes of fraud of a more than usually involved nature, requiring expert knowledge of business methods and usages. Its officers operate in the City of London and the provinces, as well as in its own Metropolitan area, and the Press sometimes refers to the 'Fraud Squad,' which does not really give an adequate idea of the very varied tasks undertaken by C.6.

C.7 is an Instructional Department, with its headquarters at Hendon. It is known as the Detective Training School and is under the control of the Assistant Commissioner of the C.I.D. Courses take place four times a year, each being attended by some ninety police officers who come from all the County, Borough and City Police Forces of England. Every officer of the Metropolitan C.I.D. must go through this course, while all Senior Detective Sergeants of the Metropolitan Force have to undergo refresher courses. There are also Police Officers from British Railways, the Ministry of Civil Aviation and similar organisations; and in addition to all this, Assistant Superintendents and many senior officers from our Commonwealth Police Forces cross the sea to study at Hendon. I am very proud to recall that while I was Chief Instructor at the Police College, I had, in a supervisory capacity, a close association with the instructors at the Detective School.

What sort of curriculum was provided for these officers? The subjects were as varied as the officers who came to gain knowledge. Among them were The place

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of the Laboratory in Criminal Investigation, Fingerprints, Footprints, Company Fraud, Homicide, Firearms and Explosives, The Work of the Pathologist, Toxicology, and a host of others. All lectures were given by the finest specialists in their own particular sphere, including senior detectives from Scotland Yard.

C.8, or Mobile Branch of the C.I.D., is more popularly known as 'The Flying Squad.' It is an apt description in view of their speed in getting after their man, but not as regards their ordinary routine duty. Only too often, I am afraid, their regular job entails days and nights of patrolling the Metropolitan area in their high-powered cars equipped with wireless, without finding a single incident requiring enquiry or investigation. This, of course, is not all, for we shall never know how many crimes their vigilance prevents.

The officers of C.8 have a fine knowledge of criminals and their activities, and the Press often contains reports of their courage and fearlessness in tackling desperate criminals. It may be a chase across the rooftops ending in a savage fight with a desperado determined to evade arrest, or it may be a fracas in a sordid night-club to which they have been directed by radio from the Information Room at the Yard. Even though knives, broken bottles or other weapons are being wielded, the Squad men are very rarely armed with anything but a truncheon, but never hesitate to 'mix it'—the reports of their courage are very well justified.

I wonder how many people now remember 'The Battle of Heath Row.' It was the sequel to one of the greatest and most elaborately staged attempts at crime ever known: a crime which, had it come off, would have yielded a vast fortune to the modern Moriarty who was behind the attempted bullion robbery at Heath

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Row in the early hours of one July morning in 1948.

With infinite cunning this man had for weeks kept watch on the then unfinished airport, at which consignments of bullion were arriving every three or four days for storage overnight in safes in a bonded warehouse. He noted the manner of transfer from 'plane to bond, observed the security precautions taken, and the times for changing the guards—who kept a ceaseless vigil over their charge. He observed that three guards were on duty throughout the night, and that round about midnight a mobile canteen brought a jug of tea to these three men.

He thereupon gathered together a bunch of the most desperate criminals from a number of London gangs, men who would stick at nothing in an emergency, and prepared for the execution of a daring and extremely simple plan. All that was needed was to find out the exact date and time of arrival of a big consignment of bullion, intercept the man who brought the tea round, drug it, allow time for the drug to take effect, get into the warehouse, take the keys from the drugged guards and open the safes containing the bullion.

Of course there are always 'Security Officers' attached to any airport, and Heath Row was lucky in having an ex-Yard Detective Inspector in the person of Donald Fish. With the responsibility for safeguarding the bullion and other valuables as they arrived, he was naturally suspicious when he found that certain strangers were taking a regular interest in what went on at Heath Row. He mentioned the matter to Divisional Detective Inspector Roberts, who got in touch with the Yard, after which Chief Superintendent William Chapman and Chief Inspector Robert Lee of the Flying Squad appeared discreetly on the scene.

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Bill Chapman, one of the astutest detectives at the Yard, decided to keep under observation one particular man who was displaying such obvious interest in Heath Row activities. To this end he detailed a *woman* detective for the job, and brilliantly she carried out her task. She traced her quarry to a café near Waterloo, saw him emerge in clothes other than those he was wearing when he entered, and then followed him to other haunts, where she took careful note of the men he contacted.

I took part in conferences with Messrs. Chapman, Lee, and Divisional Detective Inspector Roberts, to discuss the best method of capturing the break-in gang red-handed. We did not know how many men there would be in the gang, nor the precise details of the plot, but we could more or less anticipate the time they would strike—the night a consignment arrived—and we dared leave nothing to chance. In the end we decided on the following plan: twelve men of the Squad would be in the warehouse itself, nine of them hiding behind such bonded cases, etc., as provided the best vantage points, while the other three would act the part of the ordinary guards, lying on the floor as though they had succumbed to the drugged tea. Donald Fish was to be stationed in an adjacent office with a telephone nearby, connected directly to Information Room at the Yard. At a given signal he was to lift the receiver, thus sounding the alarm in '999' room. An operator would send a wireless message from there, telling a dozen Squad cars (lurking in appointed places near the airport) to make for Heath Row, sealing off every exit and going to the aid of the detectives on the spot.

In great secrecy the plan was put into operation just before midnight on July 28th. Not even the regular airport staff knew what was happening: they were

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quietly collected and taken to another shed, in which they were locked—there they had to stay until the whole thing was over!

Meanwhile the raiders' plan went forward with disarming smoothness. The man with the tea was duly intercepted, and while one man chatted with him, another drugged the tea. The unsuspecting messenger delivered the tea and went his way. The tea, of course, remained untouched, and after a lapse of time the three detectives detailed to act as guards assumed their specified positions on the floor. Remember—none of our men was armed except with truncheons.

The minutes ticked slowly by! There was the sound of a lorry being driven up to the door of the shed, followed a few moments later by the sound of a door being opened. Two shadowy figures entered, their heads covered with stockings, into which eye-slits had been cut for the wearers to peer through. The first two raiders approached the recumbent detectives and secured them with ropes. To make assurance doubly sure, they fastened strips of adhesive plaster across their lips; they were taking no chances. One raider was not too sure about one of the 'drugged' guards, so gave him a smart rap across the head with an iron bar. He then took the keys of the safe from the pocket of the now *really* unconscious officer.

The rest of the gang had entered the shed by now and were in the act of opening the safe, when the detectives made their presence known and called on the raiders to stay where they were. At the same time Donald Fish lifted the telephone receiver, and over the radio from Scotland Yard went the signal for the waiting Squad cars to converge on the airport.

Meanwhile, however, pandemonium had broken loose

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in the bullion shed. 'Get the guns,' shouted the raiders furiously to each other, thwarted in their get-rich-quick scheme, 'kill the bastards!' In a few seconds iron bars, loaded sticks and starting-handles were being swung around. Chief Inspector Lee was struck a severe blow on the head, and a pair of steel cutters found a target in the face of another officer. One detective had his arm fractured by an iron bar, and another sustained a broken nose as a result of being struck with a starting-handle.

Although outnumbered, however, the highly-trained Squad men eventually got the better of the gangsters, with the result that some weeks later several of the raiders stood in the dock at the Old Bailey, to receive sentences totalling seventy-one years. I have told this story at some length to illustrate the work which goes into the efforts of the C.I.D. in *preventing* as well as detecting crime.

Two other Departments must be mentioned, around one of which lies an aura of mystery: this is the Special Branch, which is sometimes erroneously considered to be a political police force. In fact, however, it has always been the object of the authorities to keep politics and police apart, although it is true that the S.B. owes its origin to circumstances of a political nature.

It was inaugurated during the dynamite outrages of 1883-1885. Officers of the C.I.D. were given the job of keeping Irish-American suspects under observation, ferreting out the details of bomb plots, guarding Cabinet Ministers and certain public buildings which were threatened. They unearthed a plot to blow up Westminster Abbey during the celebration of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, and they put a stop to other disquieting activities. Posted to ports both at home and abroad, they were able to watch out for likely con-



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spirators, and became so useful that they were retained as a 'Special Branch' from that time onward.

Today they deal with offences against the security of the State, maintain constant vigilance in the protection of Royalty and Cabinet Ministers, protect ports and aerodromes, deal with naturalisation matters and all enquiries regarding passports, aliens, arms and explosives.

The work of the Special Branch is naturally not confined to the Metropolitan Police District, but its headquarters are at Scotland Yard, and with the exception of ports where its officers work with the Home Office immigration staff, the S.B. are under the control of the Commissioner of Police.

Behind all these departments is yet another, consisting of highly-skilled scientists at the very peak of their profession, employed in the Metropolitan Police Forensic Laboratories at Scotland Yard. Here are experts, armed with the most modern equipment, in such varied subjects as toxicology, ballistics, chemical analysis, micro-photography and pathology. As a result of their scientific tests, a single human hair found upon the clothes of a suspect may help to prove him guilty of a cruel murder. A few grains of sand in the turn-ups of a man's trousers have, in the hands of these Police Laboratory experts, helped send a man to the gallows. The almost imperceptible markings on the base of a spent cartridge have conclusively proved that it was fired from a certain weapon, and so determined the guilt of a murderer.

After this brief outline of the ten departments of the C.I.D. used in the war against crime, here is an idea of the lines on which an actual investigation is conducted. Naturally, I can only suggest the general principles which would be followed, for every enquiry must vary according to the circumstances.

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The dead body of a person is found under suspicious circumstances. The police are informed and a C.I.D. officer dashes to the scene: even seconds may count in a case of murder. But he must not arrive with any preconceived ideas on this score, for it may, of course, be manslaughter, accident, suicide, or death from natural causes (which often occurs in suspicious circumstances).

The investigating officer must proceed with great care and thoroughness, for a mistake or omission in the early stages of an enquiry can cause great difficulties. He must not allow the body to be moved, but will himself examine it where found, to note any wounds or other likely cause of death. He will look for blood splashes and jot down their position in relation to the body. A rough sketch of the scene is useful. If the body is discovered in some open place, then the officer guards against trespassers who might obliterate important clues; he will perhaps put a rope round the scene, or protect the spot by any other means at his disposal.

As he may be called upon to give evidence weeks or even months later, he makes comprehensive notes, including details of the exact time he received the information, the time the crime was discovered, the time he arrived on the scene, and the name and address of the person who found the body. Having taken these preliminary precautions, he sends for the Superintendent in charge of the area and the Police Surgeon for the district. The latter will decide whether life is extinct, without, however, moving the body or making any detailed examination. Meanwhile the photographic and fingerprint experts will have been summoned—the former to take photographs of the position of the body, close-up views of the injuries, pictures of likely weapons, and of every object likely to be useful in solving the

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problem; the fingerprint man to test for any finger marks which might prove of value in identifying the murderer.

After this the pathologist is called in. Then, and then only, is the body moved, so that he can carry out his examination on the spot. The investigating officer will ask him how long the victim has been dead, and the pathologist, judging from the condition of the body, will be able to give an approximate time.

'What was the cause of death? What type of weapon was used?' enquires the C.I.D. man, and again the expert can express some opinion more or less definite according to the circumstances. A post-mortem examination is then carried out, at which the officer will attend; or else, if poisoning is considered a likely cause of death, the analyst will be handed certain organs and asked to say what was the probable poison used and how long it was administered before death.

Meanwhile the fingerprint expert has discovered prints on a possible weapon. The question arises: whose fingerprints are they, those of the victim or those of the murderer? If the latter, are his prints among the records filed in the Bureau?

They are? Right! Over to the Criminal Record Office, to look up all particulars regarding the suspect: his description, his haunts, his associates, and every small detail which may lead to his discovery and subsequent arrest.

With these details in his possession the investigating detective seeks out the officer in charge of telephones and wireless, who circulates with the utmost speed to all police throughout the country—and maybe to all sea and air ports—a description of the wanted man together with an accurate summary of the facts of the case. In some cases the description, photograph and fingerprints

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are circulated to nearly every police force in the world through the medium of 'Interpol,' the abbreviated form of the International Criminal Police Commission, the Central Bureau of which is in Paris.

Suppose there are stains on the clothing of the victim, then scientific and medical specialists at the Police Laboratory will be able to say from their tests whether the stains are of blood, and if so, whether human or animal blood, and whether it is of the same blood-group as that of the victim or of someone else. If fingerprints happen to be found on the weapon with which the victim was bludgeoned to death, then these will be photographed by the Yard experts, and enlarged prints can be produced in court if someone has been arrested for the crime.

Knowing that he can rely all the time on the co-operation of any or all of the different departments, the detective must also show the individual resource and initiative which comes of training and experience. He must be able to think and act quickly in an emergency, deciding in a split second whether to question a suspect or not, if he does so, he must not hesitate to make an arrest if the circumstances seem to warrant it.

If a similar incident takes place outside the Metropolitan area, senior officers from C.I. or Central Office go out into the provinces to investigate the crime at the invitation of the Chief Constable of the Force concerned. Having been on many enquiries of this kind, I cannot pay too high a tribute to the provincial police up and down the country for their unflagging co-operation with me on such investigations. The local officers, with their special knowledge of the geography of the neighbourhood, were not only anxious to afford me all the help they could, but displayed a commendable enthusiasm in

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following up any clue which might assist in tracking down the murderer. I have always been impressed by the team-spirit they showed in our joint investigations: there was never any question of jealousy or resentment at Yard officers being called in, but a complete and friendly understanding between all parties, concentrated to one end.

When it comes to local dialects the services of the provincial police are invaluable, for in some parts of the country the Yard man would have the greatest difficulty in understanding exactly what was being said, and the local police officer can act as translator and interpreter.

More than once provincial police have been instrumental in helping run to earth a murderer wanted by Scotland Yard. The most outstanding instance which occurs to me is the case of P.C. Gutteridge, murdered on the Romford-Ongar Road, Essex. Chief Inspector Berrett, one of the finest officers at the Yard, was sent down to take charge of the enquiries, and with the aid of the Essex police started out on investigations which were destined to last several months. Hundreds of people were interviewed and hundreds of statements taken. Such clues as fell into the hands of the detectives yielded no clue to the identity of the murderers, and a comb-out of all known motor-bandits was conducted without avail. But still the hunt went on, the *News of the World* offering a reward of £1,000 (later increased to £2,000) for information leading to the arrest of the murderer or murderers. The weeks went by without result. Clues poured into the Yard in shoals, but on investigation proved to be worthless.

Then, four months after the crime was committed, there was a collision between two motor vehicles in Sheffield. The driver of one, who had a passenger in the

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car at the time, gave a name and address at Stockwell, London. The Sheffield police decided on a prosecution and asked the Metropolitan police to trace the driver so that they could serve a summons upon him. The London police reported back that the name given was unknown at the Stockwell address. The Sheffield police instituted further enquiries concerning the passenger, who was eventually found to be a local man.

A police officer went to question him regarding the identity and whereabouts of his driver friend, being only interested in serving the driver with a summons for *furious driving*. The man, however, assumed that he was being interrogated in connection with the *murder of P.C. Gutteridge*. Anxious to establish that he had not been concerned in the latter crime, he declared, to the amazement of the police officer, that his companion in the car had been Fred Guy Browne, who had boasted to him of having shot Gutteridge dead in that lonely Essex lane. He gave the address of Browne's garage at Battersea.

In a matter of minutes this information was given to Scotland Yard. It was the first vital clue which had reached them as to the identity of one of the murderers, and C.R.O. soon revealed Browne as a desperado with a long record of crime, who had not long been released from gaol in connection with some daring insurance frauds.

Five officers immediately descended upon the garage at the address given by the informant. They were armed for the occasion, as it was known that their quarry would not hesitate to shoot it out if cornered. He did not, however, have the chance to do so, for the C.I.D. men lay in wait for him at the garage, and the moment Browne drove into the yard they swooped down on him,

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surrounded him and—placed him under arrest. Within a few days his confederate, William Kennedy, was rounded up at Liverpool, and in due course the pair were hanged, one at Wandsworth Prison and the other at Pentonville.

But if it had not been for the routine enquiries which followed that car accident, and if the Sheffield police had not followed up their investigations for the driver of the car with such determination, two of the most dastardly murderers in criminal history might well have cheated the gallows. I only say *might*, because in a murder of this kind, one or other of the murderers almost invariably makes a slip.

I could mention many other examples of the fine co-operation which exists between Provincial Police Forces and Scotland Yard. This understanding is to the mutual benefit of all in the general campaign against crime. The Provincial Police is as alert to help the Yard with such information as may be required, as is the Yard to make any enquiries on their behalf.

Team work again!—that is the secret of success in the field of crime detection.

# Part Two

MY CASE BOOK





## CHAPTER ONE

### THE SUPER CON-MAN

**I**N MY EARLY days as a detective, when I was trying to scrape acquaintance with the inhabitants of London's underworld, I was often surprised by the variety of different types who had committed crimes. Some of them were old offenders long practised in the arts of wrongdoing. Others were mere novices at the game, men and women who had perhaps yielded to sudden temptation or succumbed to the desperation born of hard times; yet others had taken to crime from a waywardness which defied analysis. The crimes I was called upon to investigate ranged from bigamy to forgery, from fraud and abortion to the 'light entertainment' of the suave confidence trickster.

It will always remain a puzzle to me why the 'con-men' have to go on with the 'work' when they net so quickly a large enough fortune to allow them to live in comfort for the rest of their lives. I have known men—and women—whose guile has obtained for them in a few weeks more money than you or I could earn in a lifetime by honest means (though, admittedly, they were quite likely to squander the lot very rapidly in an excess of 'high living').

I think of 'Cut-face' Robinson, so-called for the large scar on his right cheek which marred an otherwise presentable face; he was just about the luckiest crook I ever met, and he was certainly something of an artist in

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crime. William Robinson, *alias* Theodore Crozier, *alias* William Felix (and there were several other useful changes of name) was for years one of Scotland Yard's biggest headaches—as one of the most impudent and successful confidence tricksters in our files. He brought off some of the biggest coups ever known in the form of crime, without our being able to do a thing about it—since the people he victimised were very loath to prosecute because of the attendant publicity. In fact, on the few occasions when he *was* brought to justice (with perhaps a couple of exceptions), it was in connection with obtaining trifling sums of money, for which he received comparatively short terms of imprisonment.

A decidedly skilful psychologist, Robinson realised that big business men who prided themselves on their acumen would dislike having to admit in open court that they had been stupid enough to fall for the stories of a honey-tongued 'con-man.' Robinson traded on this natural reluctance, and prospered. He specialised in a form of racing swindle known as 'The infallible betting system,' or 'The safe investment scheme'—which proved very far from safe or infallible for his victims. To inspire confidence in those whom he proposes to part from their money, the 'con-man' will show great patience while setting the scene for his coup. Robinson was an artist in this respect, pursuing his course with leisurely guile, being greatly helped by his immaculate appearance, his hail-fellow-well-met personality, and the general air of opulence and refinement which he exuded.

A well-built, imposing figure of a man, rather thick-set, with round, genial face and trim moustache, he looked more like a prosperous City man than a crook. Not only did he look the part, but he acted it with a suave and impressive grace. To see him walking through

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the West End of London in Savile Row attire, with gloves rolled down over his wrists, puffing at a big cigar, one might well have taken him for a member of the Guards' Club at the very least. Every morning he was attended by a West End barber, who curled and trimmed his moustache. His hat was ironed daily, and when staying at one of his country estates he was to be seen striding about with a couple of fine spaniels. At his night haunts in town, when seeking to impress a likely victim, he thought nothing of flaunting a £100 note in his buttonhole.

I had not long been made First-Class Detective Sergeant when, some time in 1926, I went to Ealing to investigate a case of fraudulent conversion carried out by Robinson and two confederates named Henry Raymond Brownlow and Douglas, together with an attempted confidence involving £6,000.

As I approached the road where Robinson occupied a very fine house, I saw a well-dressed man coming towards me accompanied by a couple of dogs. He looked like a man enjoying a well-earned retirement, and there was no mistaking the affection with which his dogs regarded him as they frisked playfully round his legs. Suddenly it struck me that the stranger answered the description I had been given of Robinson, but, wanting to make quite sure, I approached a policeman who, I noticed, had greeted the man in passing with a cheery, 'Good morning, sir.'

'Do you know that man?' I asked him, and the constable smiled.

'Oh, yes,' he replied. 'That's Mr Robinson, a very nice gentleman.'

I thanked my unsuspecting colleague and later arranged with two junior officers to wait near the

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house while I went inside to obtain certain documents and writing-paper of a particular kind as part of the evidence against the trio. But all in vain.

This was one of the occasions I have referred to when Robinson, on being brought to trial at Ealing Petty Sessions, was acquitted. Yet this was the man who could inspire such implicit confidence in his dupes that astute businessmen were beguiled into parting with thousands of pounds on the shortest of acquaintances.

One day in 1920, for instance, a Mr Einer Stange, over from Norway in connection with a big deal in building material, called at the Yard to complain about two gentlemen named Johnson and Robinson. He related how he had been dining at Simpson's restaurant in the Strand when he got into conversation with Johnson and became so friendly that they met daily. Johnson took him around London showing him various places of interest, and later on introduced him to Robinson, who invited Stange and Johnson to stay with him and his wife at their home, Bois Hall, in Addlestone, Surrey. Both accepted the invitation, and for the next eight days had a most enjoyable time at Bois Hall (a pleasant house, well and tastefully furnished), playing a good deal of golf. Robinson was a popular member of the golf club, and he entertained his guests with lavish hospitality. There was no mention of business, no attempt at a 'touch,' until the trio were driving back to town in the gleaming car owned by their host. Even then it was only a casual remark by Robinson to the effect that he was just negotiating a 'big thing' which would yield an immediate profit.

'I can't tell you what it is at this stage,' he remarked, 'for it's pretty confidential. It can only be done in London, but when I say it's sure, I *mean* sure. There'll be anything from fifty to eighty per cent profit.'

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Johnson played up to his confederate's story.

'Any chance of coming in on it?' he asked, and Robinson replied, 'you'll have to keep it under your hat if you do. If anything leaked out, it would ruin the deal. How much do you want?'

'I'll take £1,500,' was the reply, and in magnanimous mood Robinson agreed. 'All right, you're in; and I'll tell you what—I'll guarantee your money.'

Johnson then suggested that Mr Stange might like to have a 'cut' in the deal. 'Of course—if he wants to,' replied Robinson. The Norwegian fell for the succulent bait, but still retained some caution. 'As you are so sure,' he said, 'I wouldn't mind having £10,000 in it, if you will give me the same guarantee.'

Robinson at once agreed, and the Norwegian, still without any knowledge of the nature of the transaction, signed a cheque for £10,000 on the British Bank of Northern Commerce, and passed it over.

A few days later Robinson and Johnson dined with Mr Stange at the Savoy Hotel, and Robinson then expounded his get-rich-quick scheme.

'This is it,' he told them. 'It's a racing syndicate. Viceroy is running in the City and Suburban, and I've got our money on at 10 to 1. It's now quoted at 7 to 1, so you've already made £3,000. You can have that amount right away if you like, but of course you would have to pay £500 commission. If I were you, I'd leave it, as the price is sure to go to 3 to 1 and you'll make an even bigger profit.'

Seeing that Robinson had already done so well for him, Mr Stange agreed to let the £10,000 remain where it was—actually in the pockets of the tricksters—and when Robinson suggested that if he could raise another £10,000, he (Robinson) would get it on at 9 to 1, the

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Norwegian returned to Christiana and wired Robinson that he had paid that amount to Robinson's credit at the Swiss Banking Corporation in Regent Street.

Of course, this easy money simply whetted the appetite of the tricksters, so that Robinson sent the following telegram to his victim. 'Can lay you ten or twenty thousand today's market price "Orpheus." Telegraph amount accepted and credit my bank by Friday.'

Perhaps Robinson himself was surprised when that additional £20,000 dropped into his hands *via* the Swiss Banking Corporation. Naturally, Mr Stange never saw a penny of his £40,000 back, but when he returned to England to try to recover some of it, Robinson—far from vanishing from the scene as might have been expected—not only met him, but had a ready story to explain their joint misfortune.

Instead of the odds against Viceroy shortening to 3 to 1, the horse had started at 8 to 1, making hedging impracticable. He, too, had 'lost a packet,' Robinson told Stange, but his guarantee still held good and he would refund the £40,000. There followed wires, letters and meetings, but no £40,000—until at last the suspicions of Mr Stange were aroused, and he came to the Yard to ask advice.

Just at that time the police were making enquiries into another little job of Robinson's, in which he had netted £5,600 from a business man in the City. It was a similar scheme with a similar result. This gentleman, after coming to the Yard and telling his story, consulted a solicitor. Mr Stange was informed of this, and visited the same solicitor, who sought counsel's advice as to whether it would be possible to obtain redress through the High Courts. Counsel pointed out that any property Robinson might possess would most likely be in the

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name of his wife and that on the facts before him there had been no breach of the criminal law.

This was a finding with which I entirely agree, for the process of 'hedging' had been thoroughly explained to Mr Stange, and it is hard to imagine even the most inveterate gambler risking £40,000 as a stake. Displaying extreme cunning in his dealings with the Norwegian, Robinson had kept just within the law, and—no prosecution followed.

One of our troubles at the Yard was that in this case, as in many others, the moment he laid hands on the cheques Robinson cashed them. He drew the amounts in notes of large denominations—usually £1,000 or £500. When the matter came to the Yard for investigation, every one of these notes had to be traced from their source in order to show that Robinson had handled them. Racecourses and bookmakers had to be visited, banks approached, and private individuals interviewed all over the country. But in spite of all this, nothing could be done, and 'Cut-face' Robinson went scot-free.

To go further back into what might today be called his 'conmanship,' little was known about Robinson until 1909, when his intended victim, a Brazilian, did prosecute (it was a betting trick on this occasion, too), Robinson was convicted at Bow Street Police Court, and sentenced with his 'partner'—to only four months imprisonment.

His partner, an expert in the same field, was one 'Bludger Bill' Warren, the brains behind a whole host of spectacular 'con' tricks, who had once obtained £25,000 from Sir William Cockerline, a wealthy ship-owner, of Hull. On another occasion, representing himself to be an American millionaire, 'Bludger Bill' drove boldly into Paris in a Rolls-Royce with stolen jewels and money to the value of £20,000 stuffed away in the



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upholstery and cushions of the car. He was the owner of a luxurious flat in Kensington, where he employed liveried servants and lived at the rate of £100 a day.

Robinson was certainly in good company for starting his criminal career in this country.

Whether or not he got a tip or two from 'Bludger Bill,' Robinson certainly displayed an aptitude for getting on friendly terms with those he intended to swindle. His methods of establishing contact varied with the type of victim. Some three years after the 1909 conviction he took over the home of an estate agent at Hampstead, paying him a good price for his furniture, entertaining him well and thoroughly gaining his confidence before he broached the subject of his infallible racing system. He succeeded in obtaining a sum of money for 'investment' in a concern known as the 'New Derby Stakes,' and that, of course, was the last the estate agent saw of his money.

When he went down to the coast or the country, Robinson used to stay at the best hotels, and here he would meet some of his prospective victims. Others would be introduced to him by one of his many confederates, for the 'con-man' seldom works alone. But whatever the manner of approach, the end was invariably the same—the unfortunate acquaintance was left a poorer and sadder, if wiser, man than before. Robinson's masquerades also varied according to occasions. In one case he would be a retired City underwriter, in another a retired mine owner from Australia, or a retired commercial magnate. But he was always wealthy, and always generously eager to pass on the 'good things' he knew.

Sometimes, unfortunately, his ventures ended in something worse than the mere loss of money for his victim. About two years before Robinson brought off his biggest

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coup—the £40,000 job—he succeeded in obtaining £11,335 from a big colliery owner by means of the same old trick. This hard-headed business man determined that the swindler should not go unpunished, and instructed his solicitor to apply for a process against Robinson. Before it could be applied for, however, the worry of his loss so preyed on the mind of the colliery owner that he had a nervous breakdown and had to be removed to a nursing home, where he remained for two years until his death. Although in this case at least Robinson was undoubtedly responsible for the breakdown and death of his unfortunate dupe, the proceedings against him were dropped as a result, and once more his luck was in.

One of his most amusing exploits occurred in April, 1921. A thin, grey-haired man with lined features strolled into Vine Street police station with the complaint that another dealer in jewellery had met him in Hatton Garden and told him that Robinson wanted to buy two large diamonds for a customer. He went to the Café Royal, where he saw Robinson, who selected two stones worth £425. He took them away ostensibly for the purpose of showing them to his customer, remarking, 'I'll be back in half an hour.'

Robinson's failure to return by the time stated caused great dismay to the Hatton Garden jeweller, and his repeated attempts to obtain the return of the diamonds also failed. When, for example, he tracked Robinson down to the Princes Restaurant and wanted to know 'What has become of my diamonds?' the trickster replied, 'Oh—that's all right. You'll get them back next week, I handed them to someone as security for a loan of £250.'

When the stones did not turn up as promised, the jeweller paid a visit to Bois Hall, Addlestone, where he

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again broached the matter of the diamonds to Robinson—who said that he would see him the following week at Princes Restaurant. Once more Robinson failed to keep the appointment, and this time the jeweller consulted the police. But it was really a case of diamond cutting diamond, for the man who had suffered the loss of the stones was none other than 'Cammy' Grizzard, a notorious 'fence' and a king of the underworld. It is true that 'Cammy' carried on a perfectly legitimate business as a dealer in precious stones; behind that façade of honest industry, he was a crafty and persistent receiver of stolen gems, and the brain behind many spectacular jewel thefts.

He had at his command some of the finest crooks in the land, and it was he who, with others, engineered the 'Great £136,000 Pearl Necklace Robbery' in 1913, when lumps of sugar were substituted for diamonds being sent through the post from Paris. That 'Cammy' and the gang were run to earth was due to the fine detective work of my friend—and tutor—Superintendent George Cornish, now retired. Thus 'Cammy' and his confederates duly appeared at the Old Bailey where they received various terms of imprisonment, their leader being sent to penal servitude for seven years.

To return to 'Cammy's' little deal with Robinson, I need only say that he eventually recovered his diamonds, and was well advised to drop the prosecution against Robinson; but, as an example of sheer audacity on both sides, with one crook putting it across another and the other crook, with his known criminal record, daring to lay information against the man who had duped him, I think this exploit would be hard to beat.

It was Robinson's effrontery and resource which enabled him to get away with so much. I remember

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being called upon to take a statement from another man living at an hotel in a south-coast town. It was not long after Robinson had been acquitted at the Ealing Petty Sessions, so that I was very interested when our visitor mentioned that a man named Robinson, in company with another man who posed as a Harley Street doctor, had obtained from him a sum of £4,000 in connection with a betting transaction.

During May, 1927, this man was staying with his wife at the hotel when 'Dr ——' arrived. They became friendly and went about together. A few days later a huge Vauxhall car drove up to the hotel and out hobbled Robinson, followed by his wife and two magnificent dogs. The doctor greeted the arrivals, explaining to his friends that Robinson was a patient of his who had come down to him for treatment of the neuritis from which he suffered. Poor Robinson limped painfully to his room, followed by the doctor.

Observe the preliminaries in setting the scene. Note the ease with which the pair—who often worked together—induced a friendly sympathy towards the sufferer. When the victim-to-be and his wife were invited to tea with the Robinsons they gladly accepted the invitation.

Said the husband to the doctor, 'What is your friend in business?'

'Oh,' replied the doctor airily, 'he's a retired City underwriter. I've known him some five years, and between you and me, I have done very well out of him both professionally and in business deals which he has put me on to.'

Not a word more—just that. No haste, no over-eagerness to suggest a deal, but a subtle intimation that Robinson was not only wealthy, but also very much 'in the know.' The party became very friendly. On one

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occasion Robinson asked the other man if he knew anything about income tax matters as the tax people had been demanding information regarding some very large cheques he had recently drawn payable to bearer.

Again that subtle suggestion of big money, leading up gradually to the moment when the doctor confided to the husband that Robinson was just about to pull off a big coup, and might let him have 'a bit in' if he felt inclined. The bait was laid, and it only remained to spring the trap.

One day while the three men were sitting on the fair green lawns surrounding the hotel the doctor remarked that it would be a kindly act to let their friend in on the 'good thing.' Robinson was quite agreeable, and later on said he had reserved a share up to £5,000 for the husband.

'I can't give you any details yet,' he explained, 'but will do so later. Then, if you fancy coming in with me, you can. If not—well, it won't make any difference. Don't mention the matter, even to your wife. I never tell Mrs Robinson of my deals till they are over and then I buy her a nice present.'

A couple of days later Robinson told the husband that he had 'fixed it up,' and that there was already a profit of thirty per cent on the deal, which he could have right away if he liked. 'And you need go no further,' he added, going on to say that the deal would probably be closed on the following Monday and that very likely no money would actually be needed.

The unsuspecting victim was anxious that he should reap the full reward of his investment, and paid over a cheque for £3,000, for which he received a receipt worded as follows:

'Received £3,000 on "Hot Night" for the 1927

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Derby at 12 to 1—tax on winning to be paid by you.—W. Robinson.'

To cover himself against any possible criminal proceedings, Robinson suggested to his friend: 'You'd better just give me a note authorising me to "hedge" your part of the deal if the odds reach 6 to 1 or even earlier at my discretion.' The other agreed, and later on Robinson actually wheedled a further £1,000 out of him.

Once again the victim was unwilling to make public the ease with which he had been duped—and once again there was no prosecution against Robinson.

Another man who refused to take action after being mulcted of several thousands of pounds was a big manufacturer in the Midlands. He owned a large factory around the walls of which hung notices forbidding betting of any description on pain of instant dismissal. He was extremely angry at having been 'taken for a ride' by Robinson, but not so angry as to do anything beyond laying information against him. When I suggested that he ought to take the matter further—in this case there were grounds for a prosecution—he raised his hands in horror.

'What would my employees say when they read about it in the papers?' he said. 'Me sacking them on the spot if caught putting half-a-crown on a horse, yet being caught myself for thousands. No thank you.'

During his lifetime Robinson must have obtained well over £100,000 by means of his 'infallible betting system,' yet he died a comparatively poor man. I know of at least a score of cases where he obtained vast sums of money from his victims without being prosecuted. His list of convictions is small and his sentences were light

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considering the number of his frauds. After the 1909 conviction it was not until 1912 that he was arrested in Bruges for being concerned in uttering forged notes. He was released soon afterwards without being brought to trial, but later on was sentenced in his absence to one month's imprisonment. In January, 1915, he received four months hard labour for obtaining goods by false pretences. On this occasion he rented Nunhold Grange, Warwickshire, and ordered goods to furnish it, on the pretence that he had bought the place. In 1930 he received three years penal servitude at Wiltshire Assizes for obtaining a cheque for £2,000 by false pretences.

As I had already had dealings with Robinson, I was asked by the Wiltshire police to attend and give them all the information I could as to his background; I shall never forget the look on Robinson's face when he met me in the hall of the court. 'Hey!' he exclaimed, 'you've got "Major" Young here from Scotland Yard, have you! What does he want?'

I wanted nothing! I was simply there at the request of the Wiltshire police and took no part in the proceedings either at the police court or at Robinson's subsequent trial. But I was able to give them some useful information about his past activities.

Once more, and only once, was Robinson destined to appear in the dock at the Old Bailey. That was in the year 1937 when he was sentenced to eighteen months hard labour in connection with one of his betting transactions. The Robinson luck came up again, however. He appealed against conviction, and on a point of law the learned judges allowed the appeal and the conviction was quashed.

In my possession today I have a photograph which makes me smile whenever I look at it. It is of Brownlow,

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Robinson's confederate in many fraudulent exploits. 'It is a most appropriate picture, I always think, for it shows him standing near a well known church surrounded by pigeons—symbolic, perhaps, of the human pigeons which he and Robinson plucked.

Beware, then, the glib and genial gentleman who is prepared, however diffidently, to let you in on a 'get-rich-quick' scheme. It is so easy to fall into a trap, and if ever you are approached to invest in any transaction of this kind, consult your bank manager. These gentlemen are not ignorant of the wiles of the confidence trickster, and while they would not interfere with legitimate business, they will always seek to protect their clients against any dubious transactions. Be wise before the event.



## CHAPTER TWO

### A COINER AND 'EACH WAY' SWINDLER

**T**HE CRIME OF coining, less common now than it used to be, has a long history, and one case which I investigated had a curious parallel with a coining case in the days of the Bow Street Runners.

As is often the case today, while we may know that a certain crook is responsible for an outbreak of crime, we cannot always get enough evidence against him or her to obtain a conviction. It was so in the case of Jem Coleman, one of the most notorious coiners of the day: Runners were well aware that Jem was engaged in the making of counterfeit coins, but they just couldn't bring it home to him. They could easily have rounded up the men and women who passed the 'snide,' but it was Jem they meant to have.

A man called Keys, one of the most famous of the Runners, set out to find the lair where Coleman made his counterfeit coins. By careful observation he discovered that his quarry was living in a certain street which was a warren of shabby houses, but he could not find out the exact house. He hired a man dressed up as a milkman, with the usual yoke and a couple of pails hanging from his shoulders, to walk through the streets day after day. For two months the 'milkman' paraded the street selling his milk. Not a sign of the elusive Jem did he catch, until one day Coleman peeped out of a window,

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and decided (seeing nobody but the milkman who had been passing that way for a couple of months) that the coast was clear.

He left the house, the 'milkman' reported to Keys and that night the Runners surrounded the house and caught Coleman in the very process of pouring his base metal into moulds. Coining was a capital offence in those days and Jem was duly hanged. A woman friend claimed his body, explaining that she wanted to give it a proper burial. But when no funeral followed the Runners became curious. A surprise visit to the woman's house revealed the dead Coleman still lying in his coffin; but underneath his body were found a number of coining moulds. The woman was carrying on making counterfeit coins, using her dead lover as a cover for her activities.

Now, while I was stationed at the Yard, there were a number of complaints about counterfeit coins being circulated in the district, and it was important to run the coiner to earth. We had a shrewd suspicion as to the man responsible, but, as in the case of Jem Coleman, we did not know where he lived.

The coins were very well made, but of course did not deceive the astute boys in the banks, who sorted the chaff from the wheat until we had quite a collection of counterfeit two-shilling pieces and half-crowns. After finding out all we could about the movements and activities of certain suspects known to dabble in the counterfeit business, we decided to concentrate on one man whom I will call Smith.

Observation was kept upon him, but although we managed to catch him visiting certain places from which the necessary materials for making counterfeit coins could be obtained, we were not so fortunate in discovering where he lived or where he made his 'snide.' From

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the reports of junior officers I concluded that Smith knew quite well that he was being shadowed and was resorting to all sorts of ruses to shake off his shadowers. He was a most difficult bird to catch, and it was only after lengthy observation that we ran him to earth.

He used always to appear in the same clothes: a cap of unmistakable pattern and a quite easily recognisable lounge suit, and he also carried a small attaché case. He would sally forth to make his purchases, followed by the plain-clothes man detailed for the job, and would then engage in a game of hare-and-hounds, entering pubs or tube stations by one door and leaving by another. Finally he would enter a public convenience, the plain-clothes man waiting outside for his man to emerge. After a long wait, the shadower would himself enter the place, only to find no sign of the man he had followed for the past hour or so. He had apparently vanished into thin air.

What actually happened was this: when Smith entered the public convenience he was wearing the lounge suit and cap, and carrying the small attaché case. The moment he was safe from view he took from the case a trilby hat and raincoat or mackintosh and quickly put them on, stuffing his cap into the case. Then he hung the case on a belt underneath his raincoat or mac, and made his exit, completely different in appearance from when he went in.

Of course this dodge only worked once or twice, and then the shadower tumbled to what had happened and traced his man to a large old house near Primrose Hill, Hampstead. Our difficulties were not yet over, however. What part of the house did he occupy?

We decided to give him an hour or two, so that he could get going with the melting and blending of the materials ready for pouring into the moulds. Round

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about 7 p.m. we entered the house and made for the basement flat, leaving other officers outside to see that Smith did not make a get-away while we were thus engaged.

The flat was occupied by a very tall man and three sons of equally massive build, all of whom showed extreme indignation at our visit; the father nearly assaulted one of the officers with me. This commotion was rather disturbing because we feared it might give warning to Smith, wherever he was, and give him time to destroy his moulds. We made a hasty departure, and mounted to the next floor.

Again our arrival was the signal for considerable commotion. The door was opened by a foreign lady who, when we told her that we were police officers about to search her flat, started to scream at the top of her voice, and finally fell to the floor in a swoon. When she recovered, we managed to elicit from her that she was a widow living alone, and having made our apologies we went up to the next floor.

This time a more reasonable man greeted us very pleasantly, but said he felt sure we were in the wrong house. I began to think so myself until during our conversation he mentioned that a couple lived in a very small flat at the top of the building.

When I knocked, on arriving at the door of this flat, there was no reply, but I fancied I could hear a movement from inside, so, without waiting for the door to open, we made our entry. I shall never forget the scene which confronted me.

The floor, chairs, a bed and several shelves were covered with moulds. On her knees before a blazing coal fire a woman crouched with a crucible in her hand containing molten metal. This was her first experience of a

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police raid, and she was so petrified at our appearance that she simply sat there speechless, shaking her head from side to side when we asked where Smith was to be found.

I flung open the door of a cupboard in the kitchen, and there stood the coiner. I could not help feeling a fleeting admiration for him, for as soon as he realised the game was up, he nodded towards the woman and said, 'She knows nothing about it. I take all responsibility.'

He was most insistent that he had never passed a 'dud' on a small shopkeeper, but attended racecourses and 'slipped' them to unsuspecting bookmakers. In spite of his chivalry we had, of course, to arrest the woman as well as Smith, and both subsequently appeared in the dock at the Old Bailey. Smith went to prison for four years, the woman being placed on probation.

Coining is no longer in fashion today. There is too much danger of being caught and too little profit in the circulation of 'snide' half-crowns or florins. Instead of the protracted business of making the coins and then 'passing' them, the modern crook prefers to take a chance with and a get-away in a stolen car, with a thousand pounds at the end of it. Or, if he must stick to some form of false pretences, he can do quite well for himself as a 'con-man,' on a far more modest scale than 'Cut-face' Robinson, like an amusing scamp called usually Frèd, but sometimes Claude or Guy (the Yard knew him by half a dozen different Christian names and surnames), a specialist in what may be described as the 'each-way swindler.'

Not that Fred was concerned, like 'Cut-face,' with betting systems; although a horse was often involved—not one of the sleek and shining champions of the turf, nor anything like the 'hunter' described in Fred's allur-

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ing advertisements, but an aged mount who (in the words of a vet. who examined the animal and tried him out) 'refused his fences and broke through his timber.' It appeared, in fact, from my enquiries into Fred's activities, that this horse, which he sold from time to time to different customers, had spent the best part of its life travelling to and fro on the railway between optimistic seller and disgruntled purchaser.

Although they were his main source of revenue, Fred did not confine his attention to equine transactions. There was no false pride about him, and he was just as eager to do a deal in dogs, parrots or fishing tackle; buying or selling either, as opportunity offered. There was only one thing certain in any of these deals: Fred always came off best. If he sold anything on a 'money back if not satisfied' guarantee, you could rest assured that the customer would neither be 'satisfied' nor get his money back. When I set out on my voyage of discovery concerning him, complaints had been pouring in from at least a dozen different English counties, nor had he failed to conclude a little business in Scotland and Ireland. In some cases those who complained showed a reluctance to take action, being anxious to avoid publicity. Fred was not slow to take advantage of this, and at times was extremely insolent to those whom he duped, among whom were colonels, admirals, a very famous book-maker, and men and women of all grades in society.

His *modus operandi* was as simple as it was effective. One day in November, 1928, for example, the following advertisement appeared in a well-known sporting periodical:

'BAY GELDING, in hunting condition, undocked, 16 hands, aged 7. A real brilliant performer over any

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country, carries a lady, warranted sound except makes slight whistling noise which does not stop him; a 200 guinea horse, sacrifice £95 as owner unable to hunt; tried near London, or sent on trial. Write Box 175.'

There followed the address of the periodical.

This seemed, on the face of it, an attractive proposition to anybody interested in horses, the advertiser displaying such a keen knowledge of what was required in the hunting field. From a gentleman living at Newmarket, Fred received a note asking where the writer could see the animal. Back went a well-written reply on good-class notepaper, to the effect that the horse was then in Hampshire where he had 'been hacked all summer and hunted to date.'

Then came the touch. If the writer would send a cheque for £95, he (Fred) would put the horse on the railway, carriage paid, on the understanding that if the animal was not as guaranteed, and the purchaser sent it back within fourteen days, the £95 would be returned.

The cheque arrived; the horse was despatched on December 3rd, 1928. Two days later a veterinary surgeon examined and tried the animal over a three-foot rail. It refused the modest jump. He found that the 200-guinea bay gelding was about *fourteen* years old and not seven as stated, and that when he tried to jump him the animal smashed into the rail every time. The buyer naturally returned the horse and asked for his money back. Letter after letter passed between seller and purchaser, but the Newmarket gentleman never recovered his £95 in spite of obtaining judgment for the amount at Marylebone County Court.

Meanwhile, complaints streamed in from all direc-

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tions. One arrived from a woman living at Horsham, who had advertised a parrot and cage for sale for £20. How subtle was Fred's approach, in writing, to the advertiser:

'I cannot afford to pay you £20 down for the bird. We had all set our hearts on having a talking parrot and are very disappointed at not being able to have him. The bird would have had a happy home here and would be well looked after for life. I wonder if you would really let me purchase it by paying you weekly. I would pay you 50s. *regularly* every week until I had paid you £25 . . .'

The offer was accepted and early in December Fred sent his 'man' with 50s. to collect the bird and cage; his 'man,' of course, was himself. Weeks went by, and when the good lady received no further money, but only numerous letters offering all manner of excuses, she placed the matter in the hands of a solicitor, who took out a default summons obtaining judgment for £2 down and the balance at £2 a month. The judgment was completely ignored, and, as it was found that Fred had no goods upon which execution could be levied, the matter was allowed to drop.

Then, from far-off Edinburgh, came information of another unsatisfactory transaction with Fred, this time from a colonel who had purchased some fishing tackle for £10 10s. He found that it was far from being 'as advertised' and asked for his money back. In this instance he succeeded in getting back all but £4 of the money he had parted with.

Less fortunate was a farmer near Droitwich who paid £20 for a horse and harness, which he had seen advertised in a highly reputable morning paper. (That was



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one of Fred's subtleties: the newspapers or periodicals he selected for his advertisements were all of good class.) In return for the £20 the farmer received an acknowledgment together with a promise to send the horse by rail on the following Monday. Instead of the animal, however, the purchaser received a letter apologising for not sending the mare on that day as one of his (the writer's) cobs had met with an accident, and he was using the buyer's horse for a few days; it would be sent off very soon. The mare still did not materialise, and in spite of a lengthy correspondence the farmer got neither horse nor the return of his £20.

It was now the turn of Fred to become the complainant. Not to us, of course, for we at the Yard already knew too much about him and he fought shy of any further acquaintance. It happened when a breeder of spaniel dogs in Pembrokeshire advertised a brown spaniel for sale at the price of 12 guineas. Our enterprising crook, using yet another *alias*, wrote asking for particulars of the dog and then wired 10s. for the animal to be sent to him on trial.

The difference in negotiation is interesting. When Fred was the salesman he always insisted on the full price being sent in advance; but when he was the purchaser, he sent just enough to cover the cost of travel. Quite frankly, I could never understand why he went to all the trouble he did, for the sake of the few pounds he managed to extract from those he duped. Had he turned his literary talent to other ends, he might surely have found it more profitable. Consider this letter, for example, sent to the breeder a few days after receipt of the dog.

'I had the opportunity of taking the dog to the country for the week-end. I find him a good worker

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and retriever of fur, but he will not retrieve feather. I shot a wood-pigeon and also a moorhen just to try him, but he would not touch either. Can you account for this? I want a dog for game.'

The only game he wanted a dog for was the 'con' game, and I don't suppose the dog had been further than the back garden of his home. But Fred certainly displayed expert knowledge of dog usage.

Meanwhile the breeder was becoming anxious about his money, and kept writing to Fred for his 12 guineas. The latter, however, was still complaining about the dog's dislike for 'retrieving feather' and suggesting that 8 guineas would be a fair price. He finally knocked this offer down to 7 guineas in a further letter, in which he asked for the dog's full pedigree, 'as I am told he is a Field Spaniel, not a Springer.' The offer of 7 guineas was accepted and Fred sent a couple of pounds 'to show good faith.' That was the last the breeder ever received from him, and as to the dog, a singular coincidence might have been noted by anyone in possession of the facts.

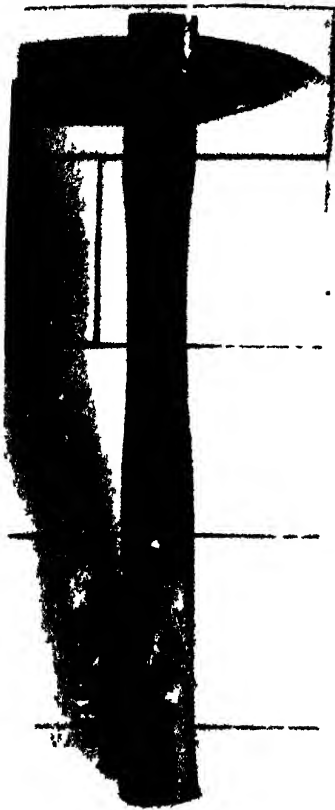
The last letter from Fred to the breeder, offering 7 guineas for the dog and enclosing the £2 on account, was dated August 18th, 1930. Ten days later, on August 28th, an advertisement appeared offering a dog for sale for 12 guineas, the very price which the Pembrokeshire breeder had asked for the dog he sent to Fred. The advertisement came to the eye of a well-known Vice-Admiral, K.C.B., who sent a cheque for 12 guineas to the advertiser. On arrival the dog proved to be unsuitable, so was sent back to its master with a demand for the return of the 12 guineas. But, as in so many instances, no money was forthcoming. So far, the subject of this

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story was ten pounds in on the deal, allowing for the two pounds he sent to the breeder.

Meanwhile Fred, under his various names, switched from horses to dogs and from dogs to horses with beautiful impartiality. His faithful if ancient steed was sent hither and thither to this would-be customer or that, never finding a home or resting-place unless it were provisionally with his usual master. At one period the latter rented stables at St Albans and, in the name of 'Guy,' advertised horses, dogs and guns for sale, until complaints caused the police to make inconvenient enquiries (whereat Guy suddenly vanished).

The climax came when the stud-farm manager of a world-famous bookmaker saw an advertisement offering a 'Bay Gelding' for sale for 30 guineas. His master being away at the time, the manager decided to purchase the animal in his absence and sent a cheque for th. 30 guineas. The horse duly arrived, the same old horse, which must surely by now have broken all records for rail travelling. The stud manager looked it over, and his critical eye missed no point—in favour or against. It did not take him long to decide that far from being a skittish seven-year-old, this animal was approaching the sere and yellow of horse age. He sent it back in accordance with the conditions mentioned—'money back if not satisfied'—and asked for his money back. Guy at once wrote in reply that he had another 'young horse' instead, but the stud-farm manager had been once bit. Letters and wires passed between Fred and the manager: promises by the score on Fred's part to dismiss demands from the manager. Evidently realising that he had a different type of customer to deal with, Fred sent him a sum of £5 at an interval of a month. Then he sent a post-dated cheque for £27 17s. 4d. followed by a telegram asking that the



W. J. Thomas  
5 Canberry Rd  
Bournemouth

These pictures show the hammer used by William Henry Podmore (*top right*) when he murdered Vivian Messiter (*centre right*). The address in Podmore's handwriting was an important clue that led to his arrest.



A picture taken at Southampton in 1924 during the investigation of the Podmore case. The author is seen on the right with Inspector Chithfield of the local police and Chief-Inspector John Proctor of Scotland Yard (centre).

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cheque should not be presented. Other wires and letters of excuse and promise followed, until at last the book-maker himself took a hand, telling Fred, without mincing words, that unless he settled up within a certain time he would find himself in an awkward position. The book-maker also mentioned that he had had enquiries made, and discovered that his manager was 'not the only mug' who had been treated in the same way.

The impudence of Fred (or Guy) will be apparent from his reply. He said he had written to the stud-farm manager and went on, 'I do not think any gentleman would appreciate being termed a "mug." I have referred to the dictionary and find the word applies to a kind of earthen or metal cup. Please explain.'

Not did his impudence abate when the bookmaker tersely informed him that he had placed all the facts and correspondence in the hands of Scotland Yard. Wrote Fred, 'I do not understand why you are forwarding my letter etc., to Scotland Yard, as I am not aware that they are letter collectors.'

It was at this little interlude, when the complaints were rolling in again, that I began enquiries into Fred's activities. It was not my first acquaintance with him, for I had met him in 1927, when previous complaints were received at the Yard. On that occasion he was carrying out his exploits from 'The Willows,' Churchfield Road, Acton. The writing-post bearing this embossed address gave one the impression that 'The Willows' was some pretentious dwelling on the scale of a manor house. Actually, when I finally located it, I found that it was a dingy arch under a railway bridge, which was used as a salubrious spot for the mobile horse thief to rest and enjoy a respite from his

I pounded on the door

a person

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answering to the description given of Fred. I explained the nature of my errand—enquiries into certain complaints in connection with his sale of the horse, which, as we talked, seemed to turn a pair of pleading eyes upon me.

'My master is out of town,' he blandly told me. 'I am his manager, and I can assure you that he will give immediate attention to any complaints on his return.' I put it to him that I had good reason to believe that *he* was the absent 'master,' whereupon his attitude changed at once. 'Supposing I am—what can you do about it?' he demanded airily.

As a matter of fact there was nothing I *could* do. There had been no breach of the law so far, and I was simply investigating complaints to find out how far they were justified, and decide whether there had been any false pretences. Probably Fred was well aware of this legal point, but in any case I continued my enquiries in other directions. These did not take me very far, especially as the astute Fred decided shortly afterwards to disappear from 'The Willows.' As a prosecution could not be started owing to lack of evidence, it was some little time before our paths crossed again.

About 1930 it came to my notice that a man called 'Claude' was carrying on a similar sort of business, which in those days was known as 'horse coping.' The methods employed were so similar that I decided to make enquiries as to the identity of Claude, and was not in the least surprised to find that it was my old friend Fred. In the meantime he had been perpetrating the same old dodge under a variety of names.

I kept a very close watch on his movements and persisted in investigating every complaint that came along, until at last, I had sufficient evidence to launch a prosecu-

### *A Coiner and 'Each Way' Swindler*

tion. He was quite surprised when I eventually arrested him, and at once tried to bluff it out. 'You've got nothing on me,' he said, 'I'll see I give you a run for your money.' To save delay and expense in dealing with the case, the Director of Public Prosecutions decided that the accused should be tried at the Wealdstone Petty Sessions rather than at the Old Bailey. The counsel representing the Crown was Mr Ronald Howe, C.V.O., M.C., now Deputy Commissioner at New Scotland Yard, and my immediate Chief over a number of years in the C.I.D.; at that time he was employed in the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and was often seen in our criminal courts.

To our surprise, instead of 'giving us a run as threatened, Fred (or Guy or Claude) pleaded guilty to three charges, and was sentenced on two charges to two six-month periods of consecutive imprisonment (i.e. twelve months in all) and fined £50 or a further three months on the third count. I rather fancy he preferred this course to a trip to the Old Bailey, where he would probably have received a heavier sentence.

After the proceedings he sent for me. It was not a friendly meeting, for he told me bluntly that he had no intention of paying the £50 fine, and would rather do the extra time. All of a sudden his rage got the better of him and he launched out into a torrent of abuse against myself and the magistrates—concerning whose parentage he expressed lurid doubts.

I left him to calm down, but I have often wondered what happened to the steed I saw at 'The Willows.'



## CHAPTER THREE

### CLUE OF THE DIRTY DUSTER

**I**T IS ALWAYS a great day in the life of a detective when he goes out on his first enquiry into a case of murder. Naturally, he will not on this occasion be in charge of the investigation, that burden being carried by a senior and more experienced C.I.D. officer. Murder is a serious business; and though it may sometimes be a straightforward enquiry in which neither the manner of death nor the identity of the murderer is in question, it may also happen that there is considerable mystery about both these aspects of the crime, requiring the presence of a highly-skilled and practised C.I.D. officer at the head of things.

To assist him, this officer is accompanied by a detective-sergeant, and if necessary he may also ask for any number of other C.I.D. men to carry out enquiries of a routine nature. This was done by Chief Inspector George Cornish, one of the finest detectives who ever graced the Yard, when he was deputed to solve the Charing Cross Trunk Murder.

On May 6th, 1927, a man drove up to Charing Cross Station in a taxi, on which was a large black trunk. With the aid of a porter, the trunk was deposited in the left-luggage cloakroom. The man then entered another taxi and drove off. Four days later one of the cloakroom attendants noticed a very unpleasant smell coming from the trunk and called a police constable. The latter

### *Clue of the Dirty Duster*

at once got in touch with Bow Street Police Station and within a matter of minutes Divisional Detective Inspector Steele was on the spot. On raising the lid of the trunk and removing some brown paper, this officer saw the head of a woman. He slammed down the lid, and in a very short space of time the trunk with its gruesome burden was on its way to the mortuary at Westminster Coroner's Court.

Meanwhile, the Yard had been informed, and Chief Inspector George Cornish was instructed by Chief Constable Wensley to take charge of the enquiries. He arrived at the mortuary just as the remains were being removed from the trunk in the presence of Dr Weir. A pair of black shoes and a woman's handbag containing four pieces of chewing gum were the first articles to be taken from the trunk. There followed four bloodstained parcels, the first of which contained a pair of human arms, severed at the shoulders. These were wrapped in towels and a pair of knickers, upon which was a tab bearing the name of 'Holt.' Two other parcels contained the legs of the dead women, while the fourth contained her head and torso. The head was wrapped in a duster, while the torso was tied up in a blue jumper and some underclothes. On one garment were two laundry-marks.

Sir Bernard Spilsbury, assisted by Dr Weir, carried out a post-mortem examination and discovered that the woman had been rendered unconscious by a blow on her head and had then been suffocated.

Thus was the curtain raised on what became known as 'The Charing Cross Trunk Murder.'

The first thing to concentrate on in any case of murder is the identification of the body. This makes it possible to trace the associates of the murdered person and learn something about their mode of life, what they were

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doing during their last hours, and when they were last seen alive. George Cornish set out, accordingly, to establish the identity of the body in the trunk.

There were certain clues already in his possession. There was the name of Holt on the pair of grey knickers; there were the two laundry-marks on another article of underclothing, and there was something else: a label attached to one handle of the trunk on which was printed in block letters, 'F. Austin to St Lenards,' the latter word being mis-spelt.

In a case of this magnitude the officer in charge of the investigation obviously cannot carry out in person all the manifold routine enquiries involved. Other officers are therefore deputed to assist him, and it is in this way that young detective officers are given an opportunity of studying the methods used by senior and very experienced officers in elucidating various problems. I was one of the junior detectives called in to assist Chief Inspector (later Superintendent) Cornish in this case, and here I must acknowledge the debt of gratitude I owe to him for the invaluable experience I gained under the command of this man, who when he retired from his long service as a detective was described in the Press as 'The Murder Wizard of Scotland Yard.'

The first thing he did was to issue to the Press photographs of the trunk, clothes, shoes, handbag and laundry-marks. The pictures appeared in the early editions of the London evening papers, and the response was almost immediate. A trunk dealer from Brixton called at the Yard and stated that he had sold a trunk similar to that shown in the Press, a few days before May 6th. There had been a label upon it with the mis-spelt word 'St Lenards,' only it was not the same label which was found upon the trunk. This indicated that the purchaser of the

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trunk had copied the original label, for what purpose could only be conjectured. The dealer gave a description of his customer: he was *dark*, with slight moustache, of medium build, and wore a dark suit.

In all the cases on which I have been engaged I do not remember one in which there were such an abundance of clues all pointing in wrong directions.

Meanwhile the laundry-marks were traced as belonging to a Mrs Holt. She gave the name of ten women who had been maids in her employ during the previous two years, and by a process of eliminating these women one after another, the body in the trunk was eventually identified as that of a Mrs Minnie Bonati, living apart from her husband under the protection of another man. She had been employed by Mrs Holt in the name of Mrs Roles.

Mrs Bonati, we discovered, was a lady who enjoyed a great deal the society of the opposite sex, and bestowed her favours with more generosity than discretion. When, however, her numerous men friends were run to earth, none of them had any difficulty in proving his innocence of the crime. A Mr 'F. Austin,' located in the St Leonards area, was also cleared of all suspicion.

One other clue had come into our possession. On May 6th—the day when the trunk was deposited in the cloakroom—a shoeblack in the station yard noticed a piece of paper fluttering from the window of a taxi-cab as it drove away. It was a cloakroom ticket. He picked it up, and murmuring something about the 'carelessness of some people,' took it to a cloakroom attendant, who put it on one side in case the trunk owner discovered his loss and returned. A small and insignificant detail in itself, this simple incident was sufficient to fix in the mind of the attendant the appearance of the man who

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had deposited the trunk with its grisly remains.

The newspapers, of course, were devoting columns to the story of the 'Charing Cross Trunk Crime,' and I would like to pay tribute to the value of the Press in assisting the police in many of their enquiries. The publication of the photographs of the trunk and laundry-marks had already enabled us to establish the identity of the murdered woman, and had brought forward the dealer who sold the trunk.

The emphasis laid upon the trunk in the newspapers now resulted in a taxi-driver coming forward to say that about the time of the murder he had driven a man with such a trunk from a building in Rochester Row to Charing Cross Station. He had helped the man to carry the trunk down the stairs from a landing, and had remarked on its being very heavy. His fare had replied that it contained books.

The taxi-driver was asked to give a description of the man, and said that he had *fair, sandy hair*. This tallied with the description of the man given by the cloakroom attendant who had taken in the trunk; but it differed completely from that given by the man who had sold the trunk. 'It was a bit puzzling, but descriptions are uncertain things at the best of times, and anyway here was a clue which simply had to be followed up at once.

The premises from which the taxi-driver had taken his fare were situated directly opposite the Rochester Row Police Station. It was a four-storey building containing offices above a shop. The occupants of the offices were questioned, and one man remembered having to 'step round' a similar trunk which he found standing upon the third-floor landing several days before. The tenant of the front-room office on this floor, we learned, was a J. Robinson, carrying on business as an estate

### *Clue of the Dirty Duster*

agent. He had not been seen there since May 9th, when he left a note saying that he was 'broke' and would not be returning. It seemed rather singular in the circumstances.

Obviously it was essential to trace this gentleman. Enquiries were made at his lodgings. He had left, said his landlady, and his whereabouts were unknown. On making a search of the room he had occupied, we found a notice from the Post Office informing him that a telegram sent to 'Robinson, *Greybound Hotel*, Hammer-smith' had not been delivered, as no person of that name was known there.

By a very strange coincidence Mrs Robinson, a woman whom Robinson had bigamously married, was in fact working at the hotel named, but when the telegram was presented, it was handed to a barmaid who had only just been employed there and did not know that Mrs Robinson was also one of the staff. She had handed the wire back to the telegraph boy with the brief statement, 'No—she's not here.' Hence the notice to the sender of the wire, without which the apprehension of Robinson might have been delayed.

Every minute clue must be followed up in a murder enquiry, so that when Inspector Cornish visited the public house, he not only interviewed Mrs Robinson, but later the same evening accompanied her to the *Elephant and Castle* public house, Walworth, where she was to meet her husband.

Robinson showed no great perturbation on being asked to go to Scotland Yard to make a statement. He gave a detailed account of his movements on the vital days. He had never seen or heard of Mrs Bonati, never bought a trunk at Brixton, and had never possessed such a trunk.

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'Have you any objection to seeing the taxi-driver, the porter who helped with the trunk, or the dealer who sold it?' asked the inspector.

'None whatever,' was the prompt reply, and he was confronted by them.

*Not one of them recognised him!* There was nothing to be done except let Robinson go. He calmly lit a cigarette and sauntered from the Yard with absolute nonchalance. He may well have thought that he had talked himself out of it, but he had not reckoned with the dogged persistence of George Cornish. By this time information was coming in from all quarters. Scores of people were interrogated and statements taken. Every titbit of information, every statement was thoroughly investigated—all to no avail.

Several days elapsed during which there was ceaseless activity. On May 21st George Cornish held a conference at the Yard at which we were all present, seniors and juniors alike. Every clue and every detail of the investigation was gone over. Every article taken from the trunk was re-examined, including the drab, dirty-looking duster found wrapped round the head of the unfortunate victim.

George Cornish took it in his hands and scrutinised it closely. It was *yellow* in shade and heavily stained with blood. I saw him give a sudden start as his eyes came to rest on a certain part of that evil-smelling duster with the clotted blood of Mrs Bonati thick upon it. 'I am going to wash this bit of cloth,' he said, and left us for some minutes. When he returned he held the still-wet duster before our eyes and pointed to one corner. In marking ink, still faint, but now discernible, though not too clearly, one could just see the word *Greyhound*. Owing to the bloodstains and grime upon the cloth this had hitherto been invisible.

### *Clue of the Dirty Duster*

'There it is, gentlemen,' he said, and then after a dramatic pause, 'This duster came from the *Greybound*.'

The importance of this discovery was not lost upon me. Here was a definite link between the place where Mrs Robinson was employed and the body in the trunk. But again there must be no loophole left open for doubt: the duster was taken to the *Greybound*, and shown to one after another of the people employed on the premises; all of them shook their heads, until at last one barmaid recognised it.

'Yes,' she said, 'that is the duster I had some weeks ago. I am quite sure of it because I washed it out in a basin of water in which I had washed a yellow polishing cloth and I remember it got stained *yellow*.'

So now the connection was definitely established. Back to Robinson's office in Rochester Row to search every nook and cranny. There, caught up in the plaited cane of a wastepaper basket was a matchstick. On it were stains—red in colour. There was also a woman's hairpin. The red stain on the matchstick responded to tests for human blood. The hairpin was similar to those in the hair of the dead woman.

'Find Robinson and bring him in,' snapped Cornish. 'I want to check over the statement he made.'

Next morning Robinson was at the Yard. George Cornish was busy at the moment and kept him waiting. Presently one of the sergeants in charge entered and told the inspector that Robinson wanted to see him urgently. Cornish went down, and it was then that Robinson, all his assurance gone, and with beads of perspiration on his brow, made his second statement. His first words betrayed the state of nerves to which he had been reduced.



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'I realise this is serious,' he blurted out. 'I met her at Victoria and took her to my office. I want to tell you all about it. I done it and cut her up.'

The inspector cautioned him, but nothing could stop the torrent of words, as Robinson went on to describe how he had met Minnie Bonati and taken her to Rochester Row. She asked him for money and when he refused, made as though to attack him. He pushed her away . . . she fell, struck her head, rolled over and then lay still. He went out, leaving her to get up and go away. The next morning, when he returned to his office, he found the woman dead, and, faced with the dilemma of having a dead body on his hands, he decided to dismember it.

It is worth while here considering how Robinson carried out this grim task, for it throws an interesting light on his character: 'I decided to cut her up in pieces and cart it away in parcels,' he declared.

As I have already mentioned, the room in which he carried out his revolting surgical operation faced the window of the Rochester Row Police Station. Realising that any curious eyes peering from these windows would have a good view of what he was doing, Robinson first of all 'moved the body from where it lay to a spot between the two windows of his office; his activities would thus be screened from sight. Then he went out and bought six sheets of brown paper and a chef's knife. He first removed every vestige of clothing from his victim, and then cut off her arms and legs and tied them up into parcels with brown paper and string. These gruesome bundles he put into a cupboard; the head and torso was placed in a corner of the room. The following day he purchased the trunk, into which he packed the whole of the remains, afterwards depositing it in the station cloakroom, as already described.

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This was the story he told, glibly enough, though not without signs of stress.

It was explained to him that he would be detained while certain points in his statement were being checked. He had stated, for instance, that after the dismemberment he buried the chef's knife under a tree at Clapham Common. This necessitated his being taken to the Common in company with George Cornish. Once there, he used his hands to scoop away the earth around the roots, eventually bringing to light the knife with which he had dismembered the body.

During his detention at the Yard, I was placed in charge of him until action was taken. We sat in the waiting-room together; he was obviously rattled and anxious to talk. He was a well-built fellow, not bad-looking with blue eyes and fair hair.

'I knew you'd catch up with me in the end,' he began, and casually I remarked, 'What have you been doing with yourself?'

'You know all right,' he answered. 'You've had me tailed ever since I first came here.' He then went on to reveal the reactions of a guilty mind in the ever-darkening shadow of discovery; it was an interesting, if rather awesome, study.

'One night I went into a pub in North London,' he told me. 'Everybody was talking about the murder until it gave me the creeps. At last I couldn't stick it any longer so I went over and joined in. "I reckon the man who did it must have been mad," I told them, but they wouldn't wear it. I decided it would be as well to get away from the place as soon as possible, so I cashed a cheque—I knew it would bounce—got the change and hopped on a bus that was going to Brixton. On the way I saw a placard saying, "Arrest Imminent," and I got

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off the bus to buy a paper. I bought three, and got on another bus going the same way. When I got to *The Horns*, Kennington, I saw another placard saying, "Arrest in 24 hours." I got off the bus again, and as I was afraid to let anybody see me reading about the murder, I went into the public gardens there and sat down on a seat. I had just pulled out my papers when an old lady came along and sat on the same seat. I stuffed the papers into my pocket again. She looked a funny old girl and I thought she might be a 'tec in disguise. Presently an old man comes hobbling along with a stick. He sits down on the other side of me and I gets the wind-up proper. But I keeps quiet and just sits there.

'Presently the old man leans across me and says to the old lady. "And how's your rheumatics this morning, Mrs Jones?" She replied, "Oh, something terrible. I didn't get a wink of sleep last night." A little while later the man turned to her and said, "Have you heard of that terrible murder where that beast cut up a woman's body?—hanging's too good for the likes of such men. . ."

'I didn't wait to hear any more. Wherever I went, it seemed, I heard nothing talked about but the Charing Cross Murder, till I was nearly crazy.'

Such were the outpourings of John Robinson on that bright May morning as we sat together in Scotland Yard. Round about 5.30 p.m. he was charged with the murder of Minnie Bonati. Police court proceedings followed, and then his trial at the Old Bailey.

There was no nervousness about him when he stepped into the dock to face the late Mr Justice Swift and a jury. Calm and assured, he leaned over the rail of the dock every now and then to murmur a few words to his solicitor, but for the most part he sat back in his chair just listening to the evidence. Even in the witness-box

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he stood erect and ready, his blue eyes gazing out over the court from beneath a pair of bushy eyebrows, his sandy hair brushed well back from his forehead.

He repeated the story he had told in his statement to George Cornish about his meeting with the dead woman; emphasising the horror which gripped him when he returned to his office and found her dead. Up to a point it was a plausible story. He *might* have struck the woman when she threatened him. He *might* have left her where she fell, thinking she would recover and go. He *would* be seized with horror when he found her dead *if his story had been true and he had been innocent of her death*. But how would any innocent man have been likely to behave? The police station was directly opposite. He could have gone across and told the truth.

When the judge suggested this to him, Robinson replied: 'The position I was in was terrible. I did not know what to do.'

'Why was it terrible?' demanded Mr Justice Swift. 'It was unpleasant to find somebody dead in your room, but where was the difficulty, if you had done nothing wrong, in going to the police station across the road and saying, "I had a few words with a woman in my office yesterday, and this morning I found her dead."'

To answer this deadly probing question required more subtlety of mind than Robinson possessed. There are few innocent men who would resort to the cutting-up of a dead body, tying it up in parcels, packing it into a trunk and driving off with it rather than confess to an indiscretion, however sordid. Robinson groped around for an adequate explanation, and then, as though he knew he was trapped beyond escape, blurted out: 'I did not look at it in that light.'

But the jury did, and having heard the evidence of Sir

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Bernard Spilsbury that the woman had been struck on the head and afterwards suffocated; that if she had fallen and struck her head on the fireplace, as suggested by Robinson, the skin would have been injured, they returned a verdict of guilty.

Some little time after the trial I was on the train from King's Cross to Newcastle on another enquiry. The train was just steaming out of the station when the Charing Cross Trunk Murder suddenly flashed into my mind, and I thought of John Robinson. I looked down at my watch. The hands pointed to nine o'clock, and I realised at this very hour Robinson was taking the last walk he would ever take in life—to the gallows.



A view of the magnificent up-to-date forensic laboratory, which has been the downfall of so many criminals



A corner of the telephone exchange at New Scotland Yard.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### UGLY LOTHARIO AND OLD RETAINER

**I**N 1928 I met the ugliest crook I have ever come across in the whole of my forty-three years as a police officer: this was the arch-criminal Gerald Newman, who boasted among his villainies blackmail, bigamy, robbery, safe-breaking, swindling and false pretences.

His features were as repellent as his black record of crime: long, gaunt face, heavily lined, dark and piercing eyes, lowering brow and short, cropped moustache—though at one period he affected a heavy, Kaiser-like moustache and a little gratee beard, which made him look even more sinister. Yet, for all this, women appeared to follow him in spite of his repulsive features, and while there were many women who had cause to rue their association with Gerald Newman Newman himself, Henrietta Hollamby, threw in her lot with his first wife, completely, even taking part in his criminal life. Henrietta, suffering terms of imprisonment in consequence of her husband's crimes, I would say that it has baffled this ugly Lothario in his career, the way women, often owed her husband's 'daughters' of good character, fall under his kindness was ill repaid. (Typical of scoundrels.)

Henrietta had been installed in the home, and into the underworld went off to Monte Carlo where they remained steadfastly at each other's side, indulged in an orgie of pleasure, trials and tribulations until the time of his death. They both passed their many hands during their chequered careers, and



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I never ceased to wonder how a woman like Hollamby could ever have come under the influence of Newman and been content to become a menace to society.

Like many crooks, Newman started off on his criminal career in a small way. The fact that his father was a barrister with a good legal practice, and that he had received an excellent education did not deter him from embarking on a life of crime. A spendthrift by nature, fond of women, and over-fond of the good things of life, Newman lived far beyond his means. It was hoped that his marriage to a lady well known in the area where he lived would have a restraining effect upon his wild career, but his cruelty and his association with several other women compelled her to divorce him.

He first fell into the hands of the police in 1901, when he was brought up at the Croydon Petty Sessions for obtaining £7 10s. by fraud. He presented a false cheque to a tradesman, and this was considered so serious that although it was his 'first offence' he was sent to hard labour for six months. Two years later he was again in the hands of the police, this time for assault and threats. Two months imprisonment followed, but gaol seems to have had no deterrent effect upon Gerald, who renewed his acquaintance with prison in 1903 for stealing a bicycle. He had another three months in 1904 after being convicted of fraud: on that occasion he represented himself as clerk to a solicitor and succeeded in obtaining money from an unsuspecting client for damages and solicitor's fees.

Up till then his crimes had all been on a small scale, although serious in nature. On his release from the last sentence he took up with a woman who lived with him as his wife at Thornton Heath. She was a pretty woman whom he had picked up off the streets. Newman did not

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mind taking advantage of her mode of life, and raised no objection when his 'wife,' as she was known, brought admirers back to their home. One man in a good position both professionally and socially was inveigled into the house, while Newman was discreetly out of the way, and paid several visits—until one day he received a letter from Newman stating that he had discovered the affair between his 'wife' and her lover, that she had made a full confession of her guilt and that unless a certain sum of money was paid, he would see that the seducer was publicly exposed.

Unlike so many other victims of the blackmailer, this man refused to be bled white, as he undoubtedly would have been. Instead he went to the police, and they arrested the irate and injured 'husband,' who was sent to penal servitude for ten years.

On being released in June, 1913, Newman made for Canada, but returned to this country a few months later and contracted his second marriage to a very decent type of woman. The ceremony took place at the Croydon Registry, but within six weeks of the marriage he brought home a young woman whom he introduced to his wife as Lilian Newman, stating that she was the daughter of his first wife. In actual fact, she was none other than Henrietta Hollamby, whom Newman had met at a West End haunt, and who had fallen victim to the spell of this ugly Lothario. Very kindly, the wife allowed her husband's 'daughter' to live with them, but her kindness was ill repaid: soon after Hollamby had been installed in the home, Newman left his wife and went off to Monte Carlo with his paramour. There the pair indulged in an orgy of wild spending and pleasure-seeking until their money was gone, and then—Newman returned to his wife. But not for long: in September,

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1914, he left her for good, and thereafter never paid a penny piece towards her support.

It was 1928 when I ran this very unsavoury character to earth in connection with a number of false pretences carried out on various charity organisations and charitably-disposed people. By this time he had travelled far in his criminal career, and was delighted to tell me all about his various exploits: such as, for instance, the daring £40,000 Bond Robbery at Manchester.

It seems he was approached by an old lag named Haslem, whom he had met in Dartmoor, with the information that there would be about £200,000 worth of bonds and securities in the safes of Messrs Briggs & Co., of Cannon Street, Manchester, on the following Saturday. On that night Newman prepared an alibi by placing a pig's bladder with a dark wig on it in the bed at his hotel, to make it look as though he were lying there asleep. He and Haslem then made their way to the premises in Cannon Street.

The only entry was through a ten-foot gate surmounted by vicious spikes. Having clambered over this they came to a hoist from which dangled a chain. Newman had to leap across a passageway and clutch this chain before crawling along the arm of the hoist, and thence through an opening into the building. Having once gained an entry, the pair made for the strong-room where the safes were kept. They also found a box of cigars, which they sampled while they worked on the safes. They did not complete the job till 3.30 a.m. on the Sunday morning, by which time they had collected £40,000 worth of bonds, and decided it was time to quit. Newman joined Hollamby at the hotel, and later on the same day they made for London. There he was joined by Haslem, who, in a fit of elation, went out on the spree and picked up a

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friend, before whose astonished eyes he flashed some of the bonds while driving along in a taxi.

It was the year 1917 and the black-out was in force. Glancing sideways, the driver chanced to get a glimpse of the packets of bonds. His eyes goggled at the sight, and when Haslem kicked up a fuss about the amount of the fare, he promptly went to the police and reported what he had seen, together with the address to which he had driven his fare—the lodgings of Newman's confederate.

So Newman and Hollamby—who was in possession of some of the stolen bonds—were arrested, the arrest of Haslem followed soon afterwards, and all three were sent to gaol. Hollamby got six months and Newman three years, plus one extra day for bigamously marrying Hollamby (his legal wife being still alive). It was revealed that a year earlier the pair had gone through a form of marriage at the Chorlton Registry Office, All Saints.

Newman was more fortunate in a little job he did at the home of a retired jeweller near Reigate. This man specialised in collecting antiques, and Newman relieved him of a nice little haul of gold coins and images. 'I always like the small stuff,' he told me, 'it's easier to carry.'

The trouble came when he took the articles to a pawnbroker who combined his legitimate business with a bit of receiving on the side. He agreed to buy the stuff, and Newman was to call for his money later. When he did call, the pawnbroker was in a blue funk. He had bought some stolen property from another man who had attracted the attention of the police; the latter, he declared, were watching his shop.

It so happened that he had, the day before, taken down

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for regilding the three brass balls which were the emblem of his profession. Newman's quick mind saw the solution to their problem.

'That's all right,' he said with a grin, 'get all the stuff you have and melt it down. Mould it into a globe the same size as one of those balls, then gild them all the same colour and hang them up again.'

In a couple of hours the job was done and the ball of gold hung brazenly outside with its two innocent companions. When the police searched the place they found nothing. In due course, when suspicion had been lulled, the precious ball was recovered and the real one replaced. Newman was more than usually pleased to inform me about this outwitting of the police.

Another story he told me had a most unusual denouement. Like all professional crooks, Newman was always on the look-out for a likely crib to crack. He happened to read about an old gentleman living outside Manchester who had a fine collection of ancient French jewellery, which had been brought over from France at the time of the Revolution. Gerald decided that these historical relics had lingered too long in the old man's care, and that he could find a better home for them.

He carefully reconnoitred the place and noticed that the lawns and garden surrounding the house required attention. Representing himself as an ex-army man, and setting out with barrow, spade, fork and other gardening tools, he approached the house and asked to see the master. The lady of the house appeared on the scene and told him he might get busy in the back garden. From this point of vantage he soon saw the best place to gain entry to the house—over the conservatory and through a first-floor window.

That night, when he made his silent way into the back

### *Ugly Lotbario and Old Retainer*

garden, it was teeming with rain. He was soon soaked to the skin, but determined to carry out his plan. He took what shelter he could under a bush near the wall of the house, but the rain continued to drip down his neck. At long last all the lights in the house were extinguished, and Newman managed to get through the window he had noted. He found himself in the bathroom, and cautiously opened the door.

Creeping along a passage, he came to a door which he opened with the silence only the practised burglar can achieve. It was a bedroom! The bed was unoccupied, but on the dressing-table Newman found some rings, a gold watch and a purse containing a fair amount of money. In an old oak bureau he found some more old jewellery, but nothing like what he had anticipated getting. He decided to go downstairs and try his luck. At the bottom of the flight he saw two doors one on each side of the hall. As he opened the door on the left there was a heavy smell of scent. 'I thought I had struck a florist's shop it was so strong,' he commented when telling me this story.

He flashed his torch for a second, and an eerie sight met his eyes. There, resting on two trestles, was a coffin in which reclined the dead body of a man.

'It shook me to the marrow,' he told me. 'It was so unexpected. I stepped back quickly to get out of the room and in doing so knocked something over in the darkness. It went crashing to the ground and there was the din of breaking glass or china. I could hear footsteps racing down the stairs, and with another brief flash of my torch hid behind some curtains. A man and two women entered the room and switched on the light. One of the women spoke. 'It must have been the cat,' she said, and began to gather up the huge white lilies which had fallen from the vase I had sent crashing to the floor.

## *My Case Book*

I didn't want anyone to come poking round my hiding-place, so I took a chance. I gave a strangled, unearthly moan. I suppose it must have sounded as though it came from the corpse which lay between me and the door. The two women shrieked with horror and rushed from the room followed by the man, who, I'm sure, was equally scared. I slipped back the catch of the window behind me, raised the sash and clambered through, making off as fast as my legs could carry me.'

Well, that was Newman's story, and I certainly took it with a grain of salt—but I still think it may just possibly have been true. It would be well within his range to invent such a tale and make it sound plausible, for he was certainly resourceful, with a very inventive mind, as is shown in the records of those crimes for which he did pay the penalty.

After that three-year sentence in 1917, for example, he and Hollamby appeared at various coastal towns where they managed to live cheaply and well by means of false pretences; for which Newman in due course received varying sentences. Then, in 1925, several complaints were received concerning a Mr and Mrs Webster Gordon who were obtaining sums of money from people by hard-luck tales. One of their victims was a Canon. The woman Hollamby called on him claiming to be a relative in need, and asking his help. He gave this gladly, the lady explaining that it was to pay her fare back to Manchester.

A month or two later the Canon received another letter. This time from a Mr G. W. Gordon, who mourned the fact that his 'dear friend' had, on returning to Manchester, 'passed through a terrible time,' and died in great poverty and distress. He, the writer (who of course was Newman), had paid the funeral expenses,

### *Ugly Lotbario and Old Retainer*

some £8 15s., and invited the Canon to pay half this amount.

When I interviewed the reverend gentleman he could scarcely believe what I told him about this unscrupulous pair. So glib and circumstantial was the story told to him by Hollamby that he assured me I must be mistaken, and seemed convinced that Hollamby was indeed a distant relative. She had mentioned by name people who were known to him, and had displayed an uncanny knowledge of the family history. He would not prosecute.

Following this exploit, Newman inserted an advertisement in a weekly paper stating: 'A house to let at Clapham Common, London.' The replies simply rolled in, and when the audacious advertiser demanded it, hopeful candidates did not hesitate to send a month's rent in advance *prior* to any interview. The house was as imaginary as the recent 'death' of 'Mrs Gordon,' but certainly more lucrative, for his haul from the Canon had, after all, been only a few pounds.

Justice caught up with the pair over this 'house to let' swindle, and they went to prison. On release, Newman abandoned the role of landlord for that of solicitor. Setting himself up in a well-furnished office, he managed to attract a number of clients who entrusted their legal business to him, believing that he was a genuine lawyer. Of course, this impudent masquerade could not go on indefinitely, and his legal career came to an untimely end when he was brought up before the Magistrates at Hastings Police Court and convicted of falsely pretending to be a solicitor. But a mere two months imprisonment was nothing to Newman, and he was soon off again on yet another racket.

This time he tried a long shot while he and the ever-faithful Hollamby were staying at picturesque Exmouth.



## *My Case Book*

From there he wrote to the *Professional Classes Aid Council* asking for money to pay his fare to South Africa. The help was not forthcoming, so Newman resorted to his old tricks. In the names of Frank S. Smith and Mrs Brown—representing themselves as uncle and niece—the pair rented a furnished bungalow at The Point, Exmouth. They contracted debts with various trustful people who were beguiled by the charming couple, and lived right royally for several days. Then they 'were called to London hurriedly on business'—telling tradesmen and others that they would be returning in a few days.

On September 11th, 1927, they left Exmouth to attend to the 'important business' referred to. On September 15th a letter was received by an Exmouth tradesman, purporting to be from a Miss Lilian F. Smith, of 24 St Martin's Court, Charing Cross Road. Both envelope and notepaper were black-edged very deeply as a token of the grief of the writer.

'My dear brother died very suddenly at a London hotel,' the letter stated, and went on to promise settlement of the outstanding debts as soon as his 'affairs had been gone into.' That was the end of the Exmouth venture; which serves to illustrate the versatility of Henrietta Hollamby (*alias* Mrs Brown, *alias* Lilian F. Smith) who acted in turn as Newman's wife, his niece and his daughter.

Newman was equally versatile in his range of 'professions,' for the next heard of him was when he turned up at Lorraine Mansions, Holloway, as 'Dr' Desmond, with Hollamby once more his 'daughter.' He left rather hurriedly after cashing a number of worthless cheques and without paying the rent. Meanwhile, Hollamby had taken up the role of breadwinner; at least she tried to, for while at the Holloway address she had written to

### *Ugly Lotbario and Old Retainer*

two other charitable organisations asking for money to pay her fare to Jersey, where, she said, a situation was awaiting her. One was the *Guild of Aid for Gentlepeople*, the other was the *Gentlefolks' Help Department of the Friends of the Poor*. Neither of these Societies fell for these stories. Instead they passed on the enquiries to Scotland Yard and I was instructed to investigate the matter, with the result that justice once more caught up with Newman and his woman friend.

One could feel no regret at having to arrest a despicable criminal of the Newman type, but occasionally a crook may inspire a sneaking affection even in the detective, and I remember feeling a slight personal sorrow in June, 1928, when I read a brief newspaper paragraph reporting the death of Albert Tivendale. He had died by his own hand, it recorded, having taken enough poison to kill a hundred people. It also referred to him in parenthesis as 'The Perfect Butler,' by which description I had known him for several years. The aristocratic Albert was the last person in the world in whom I should have suspected suicidal tendencies. He was so self-possessed, dignified and assured, whether gracing the ancestral halls of some noble family, or the dock at the Old Bailey.

Tivendale was over six feet in height, portly, with thinning silvery hair, which lent a venerable dignity to his appearance. Only a couple of years before his death I had arrested him on a forged reference charge, and a week before Christmas had listened to his eloquent plea for 'another chance' at the Common Serjeant's Court at the Old Bailey. I recall the quality and refinement of his voice as he made his impassioned appeal to the late Sir Henry Fielding Dickens, K.C. (son of the great Charles Dickens). I can see him now, this real-life

## *My Case Book*

Admirable Crichton, as he leaned forward to address the Court, obsequious without being servile, with just the right blend of superiority and condescension in his voice—every inch the old retainer.

The fact that it was so near Christmas may have weighted the scales in his favour, or perhaps it was the pleading voice of his wife asking for leniency. At any rate, Sir Henry Dickens, in putting the prisoner on probation, said: 'In spite of your past, your wife still regards you with affection, and, believing as I do in her earnest desire to bring you back to a better state of life, I am going to give you another chance . . .'

Tivendale bowed with butler-like grace as he thanked 'his lordship' in suave and cultured tones before stepping from the dock to unexpected freedom. Considering that his 'past' consisted of twenty-one previous convictions for theft as well as forged references, he was certainly a very lucky man.

Yet Tivendale was not what I would call a 'hardened criminal.' In many ways he was a most amusing scamp, whose villainy was by no means mirrored in the number of his convictions or the nature of his crimes, which were brazen rather than heinous.

One morning I was sitting in my office at the Yard when a lady was ushered in. She explained that she was secretary to Lady Margaret Waterlow, and had come to complain about the conduct of a man named Tivendale, who had applied for the position of butler in reply to an advertisement. He had been interviewed at the Ritz Hotel and produced a reference from a Mrs Edith Ord-Hammond. As this 'character' was typewritten, the secretary asked for an interview with Mrs Hammond, but received a telegram purporting to be from the latter saying that she was leaving for Australia. The following

### *Ugly Lotbario and Old Retainer*

day Lady Waterlow received a letter from Tivendale declining the situation. The circumstances were so suspicious that my visitor thought it proper to bring them to the notice of the police. Her mistress did not wish to be involved in any action against Tivendale as she was leaving for the Continent.

The moment she mentioned the name of Tivendale it rang a bell in my memory, for he and the Yard had been acquainted for years, and I myself had also had professional association with him. In fact, even if my visitor had not mentioned the name, his unmistakable methods would probably have betrayed to me the identity of the would-be butler. 'I am afraid that Lady Waterlow is not the first victim of this man,' I informed the secretary as she took her leave. There was nothing to be done, and it was just one of those frequent instances where there are 'no developments.'

That incident happened on August 28th, 1926. On September 18th we received a communication from the police at Eastleigh, reporting that Tivendale had tried to obtain a situation with Captain Green Wilkinson, of Roke Manor, Romsey, again by means of a forged reference in the name of Ord-Hammond. That same month we received a further complaint, this time from Brighton, saying that he had tried by the same means to obtain a job with a Mrs K. Leland de Langley. I went to see this lady and her husband at the Ritz Hotel, London, only to be told that they had passed on the forged testimonials for our information only. So once again the enterprising Tivendale escaped proceedings being taken against him.

Meanwhile he had replied to an advertisement inserted by Captain D. J. J. Evans, of Brecon, Wales, for a butler-valet, and was interviewed in London by Mrs

## *My Case Book*

Evans. She was so impressed with the eulogistic reference produced by Tivendale—also signed Ord-Hammond—that she engaged him on the spot and he took up his duties in the Evans' household. Captain Evans was away from home at the time, but on his return became suspicious and made a few discreet enquiries of the local police. They got in touch with the Yard and learned of Tivendale's previous history.

Captain Evans gave him the sack and insisted on a prosecution. I made my way to an address in Kildare Terrace, Bayswater, where I knew Tivendale resided whenever he was not employed in one or other of the mansions he favoured with his services.

He was not in the least surprised to see me, and greeted me with a polite 'Good morning, Mr Young. Which job is this for?' I told him, and he grinned. 'Just my luck,' he remarked. 'Why can't people let bygones be bygones?' Despite the gravity associated with his profession, Tivendale had a distinct sense of humour.

It was on the occasion of this visit that he gave me a glimpse into his resourcefulness at crucial moments, describing how on one occasion, when he could see that his prospective employer was a bit suspicious concerning his bona fides, he had to think and act quickly to avoid unpleasant consequences.

As usual he had supplied a fulsome, if bogus, reference, giving the name of his former employer as a Mr Ord-Hammond (there had never, in fact, been any such person except in his lively imagination) with the address of an hotel at Leatherhead. He went so far as to go to Leatherhead and engage a room at the hotel in the name of Ord-Hammond, and that night rang through to the lady who was thinking of employing him to repeat the praises contained in the written reference.

### *Ugly Lothario and Old Retainer*

Unfortunately for him, he failed to disguise his voice, and the lady's suspicions were aroused. She went to the police, and a young police officer was sent round to make enquiries. He was received by the imposing Tivendale, who succeeded in passing himself off as Ord-Hammond and even added to the glowing testimonial already given of his butler, declaring that he would not have parted with him but for the fact that he—Ord-Hammond—was going abroad. The officer was quite satisfied and reported accordingly.

Occasionally Tivendale slipped up, as on the occasion when he tried to obtain a situation with a well-known solicitor. At an interview he grandiloquently mentioned that his 'dear father' was the proprietor of an hotel at Shrewsbury. When the cautious solicitor rang up the hotel just to check up on Tivendale's story, he found that it was a pure fabrication, neither father nor son having ever been connected with the hostelry. Tivendale did *not* obtain that job.

There was the pride of the craftsman about this scam as he told me of the many ruses he had adopted to impress his victims, and to escape the consequences of his actions.

Such then was the man who had moved with imperturbable mien through many of the most stately homes of England in pursuance of his 'butling' career (his own word in describing to me his occupation). I could well picture him in all the magnificence of powdered wig, plush breeches and black silk stockings, waiting with elegant and lofty grace upon the aristocratic folk who employed him.

How did he come to adopt such a career?

Born of Scottish parents in New Zealand, Tivendale came to England as a lad and served his apprenticeship

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in the service of the gentry. He started as a page-boy with a very wealthy family in the north of England, rising through the various stages as groom, second footman, and first footman, in time reaching the coveted position of 'gentleman's gentleman.' Finally he rose to the rank of butler, and it is then he appears to have first run off the rails. As butler he would naturally have charge of the wine cellar in the mansions where he was employed; and in his zeal to see that the wines were of the best, he himself sampled them too often and too liberally.

He once told me at one of our various professional meetings: 'I could have been drunk all day long if I had wanted to, but I have never been what I would call the worse for drink.' There could be different opinions about this, however, but in any case, why he should resort to theft while even slightly 'under the influence,' is one of the things I have never been able to understand. The fact remains that at the age of 36, he fell foul of the law at Whitley and received two months imprisonment for some small theft from his master. The following year, at Paisley, he was again convicted of theft. Apparently this sobered him up to some extent, for he went straight for nine years. At this time he was employed as butler on an estate at Trim, Ireland, where he gave every satisfaction, until he again fell from grace and broached a bottle of his master's wine with disastrous effect. He stole a few paltry articles and was sent to prison for twelve months.

Now Albert knew little else beyond 'butling.' The only profession about which he knew anything was that of life below stairs. After that sentence of twelve months he naturally found it difficult to find situations in the only job he knew, without a reference from his previous

### *Ugly Lotbario and Old Retainer*

employer. To overcome this difficulty he simply wrote out his own references, took up positions with various famous families, and stayed with them until the falsity of the references was discovered, or he overdid his own entertainment with the wine.

Convictions for obtaining situations by means of forged references followed at Newbury, Perth and Dunmow; then in 1911 came his longest spell of imprisonment—five years penal servitude, passed upon him at the Essex Assizes for a theft from the home of Lord Byng. During this period of 'time' he must have decided that theft did not pay, for thereafter he never again resorted to that crime. He merely went on forging bogus references from apparently most appreciative employers.

He was released from his five years' term of penal servitude in October, 1915. While still on ticket-of-leave he entered the service of Lady Alington. The reference which he produced for her consideration was written on note-paper bearing the embossed address of Lord Byng (who later became Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Force) and purporting to be signed by him. With such a recommendation from so famous a soldier and statesman, it was not surprising that Tivendale was welcomed in the household as a butler. Nor was he selfish in his forgery, for at the same time as he wrote this reference for himself he also wrote one for a fellow-convict who was released from prison at the same time, enabling the man to obtain a situation in a similar capacity with Sir Guy Sebright. Unfortunately for our hero, both forgeries were discovered, and Tivendale returned to gaol to complete his sentence.

Albert certainly flew high as regards the families for whom he 'butled,' and the list of eminent people whose service he entered reads like a recital from Debrett's.



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Besides the names I have already mentioned, it included Earl Curzon of Kedleston, Lady Semphill, Lord Charles Beresford, the famous admiral, the Marquis of Salisbury, and Sir Spencer Maryon Wilson.

In 1917, when Mr Stanley Baldwin was Junior Lord of the Treasury, Tivendale secured the position of butler in his household at Eaton Square, where he was in charge of sixteen other servants. He, of course, obtained this envied situation by means of a forged reference, written on crested note-paper taken from one of the other great houses where he had been employed. But this does not detract from the fact that he proved a highly-satisfactory servant until he fell to the temptations of the future Premier's wine cellar. Baldwin sacked him for drunkenness, giving him a month's salary in lieu of notice—quite a respectable amount because of his high position.

In fact, although he almost certainly *was* drunk on this occasion, it may have shown him a new and actually legal way of obtaining money from his employers; for he confided to me in later years, very proud of his acumen, that he had not really been drunk on many of the occasions when he was supposed to be. 'I was as sober as a judge,' he assured me. 'I simply used to act tipsy so that they would give me the sack and then I would claim a month's money.'

Tivendale was not always sent to prison for his bogus references. Between 1916 and 1924 he was *finéd* eight times for trying to obtain situations by means of forged characters. Then, in 1924, the Recorder at the Old Bailey, the late Sir Ernest Wild, K.C., gave him nine months imprisonment. He was released on October 11th of the same year, and within a few days made an application for a job as butler to Lt.-Col. Haig, of Windsor. A fortnight later the forgery was discovered. The note

### *Ugly Lotbario and Old Retainer*

purporting to be from his previous employer ran as follows:

'I can highly recommend Albert Thomas Tivendale as an excellent servant in every way. He is sober and entirely trustworthy. I shall be pleased to answer any further questions you may like to put to me.'

A summons was issued against the 'entirely trustworthy' butler, but he had flown, and by means of another decorative reference on crested note-paper, was offering his services to Lady Mary Maxwell, who also made a complaint. A second summons was issued and Tivendale failed to appear; a warrant was issued for his arrest.

Run to earth at Kingston, he was arrested but released on his wife's bail. She was a perfectly respectable woman who earned her own living quite honestly. She was always ready to help her husband, but Tivendale here showed little gratitude for her efforts on his behalf. He absconded from that bail and made for Wales, where he succeeded in gaining employment with Mr David Davies, the Welsh millionaire and at that time M.P. for Montgomery. Once more Tivendale became intoxicated (or else feigned drunkenness) with the result that his employer sacked him, and then, his suspicions aroused, communicated with Scotland Yard. Detective Sergeant, later Superintendent, Jack Sands went down to arrest Tivendale and when he searched the latter's trunk, found over a dozen references all typed ready for future use. Naturally, they were all on note-paper with embossed or printed addresses purloined from the various stately homes where he had been in service.

It was evident that Tivendale was anticipating another hasty move in the near future, for even while engaged in

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the service of Mr Davies he had approached Sir Frederick Preston, of Salisbury, and a Mr McGrath, of Barnwell Castle, near Peterborough. In response to their enquiry for references he sent the following telegram to both gentlemen: 'Can highly recommend Tivendale as excellent servant in every way. Sober, entirely trustworthy.'

The telegrams were signed 'Berenger St Bruyere.'

Complaint was made, and in June, 1925, Tivendale once more entered the portals of the Old Bailey via the Black Maria, for on this occasion he got no bail. In an excellent speech from the dock he told Sir Ernest Wild that he did not consider he was doing any harm in sending the telegrams as *he* knew he was an admirable servant. He scorned the idea that he would steal his master's wines. 'As for honesty,' he declared, 'I have had thousands of pounds worth of valuables in my care and no suggestion has been brought against me that I have abused my trust.' (This was quite true except for those earlier petty thefts to which I have already referred.)

Sir Frederick Preston threw a vivid sidelight on the character of the prisoner, however, by describing how he had been compelled to sack him for drunkenness after only three days service. One night when a dance was in progress, said Sir Frederick, Tivendale strolled into the dance-room and started to play the gramophone; one can imagine the consternation among those present. When challenged with being drunk he retorted, 'All I had was half a glass of bad beer supplied by your inferior butler.'

At his trial there followed his inevitable plea for 'another chance'—I never knew an occasion when he did not beg for leniency when in the dock—but Sir Ernest Wild was not deceived by his plausible tongue, and sentenced him to nine months imprisonment.

### *Ugly Lotbario and Old Retainer*

He had not long been released from that sentence when he embarked on the series of exploits which I described earlier on, culminating in his appearance at the Old Bailey in December, 1926, in connection with the forged references charge brought by Captain Evans, where, as will be recalled, he was only put on probation. I can see Tivendale now, as with stately tread he passed me in the great hall at the Old Bailey. He gave me a grin and a wink, and I wagged an admonitory finger, remarking: 'It's up to you now, Albert, you've got the chance. Happy Christmas.'

Whether or not Tivendale had a happy Christmas I do not know, but on December 22nd, only a few days after being put on probation, he was up to his old tricks; for on that day he was interviewed in London by Colonel Lord D. M. Graham, of Kneesworth Hall, Royston, Herts, and actually took up duties there on January 8th, 1927. He remained in that situation until February 12th when he was dismissed on the usual grounds—drunkenness; doubtless it was also the usual trick for claiming a month's salary, which was paid without question in order to avoid any unpleasantness, and get him out of the house as soon as possible. Even while he was employed with Lt.-Col. Lord Graham, he was already in communication with a Mrs Sturdy, of West Dean Park, Chichester, as we learnt from the West Sussex Constabulary, who informed us on January 27th that they were anxious to locate Tivendale. A warrant was issued, and once more I was greeted in friendly manner by Albert when I arrested him on February 17th, 1927, and handed him over to a police escort from Chichester; on February 25th he was fined £20 for that little escapade.

It might have been thought that these minor jolts would have made him pause at least for a while, but not

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a bit of it! Complaints continued to pour in from all over the place, Cheltenham, Worcestershire, Norwich and Glamorganshire, among others. On June 7th, 1927, he secured a post with Field Marshal Earl Haig, and three days later he was dismissed for drunkenness. While his master and mistress were at a dinner party, he had apparently locked all the other servants out in the street where the Field Marshal found them late that night on returning home. I saw the Earl in connection with the false reference used by Tivendale, but he was reluctant to take action. On June 17th I interviewed Lady Cholmondeley at Kensington Palace Gardens on yet another complaint and was able to warn her of Tivendale's record *before* she engaged him.

Then, in August of the same year, Tivendale reached the peak of his audacity when he tried to impose upon the late Mr Justice Branson by means of another forged reference. He failed to turn up for his duties, urging as reason the 'death of my beloved father,' and the judge, becoming suspicious, instituted enquiries. Tivendale went on the run, obtaining jobs in various parts of the country through his old tricks, but never staying long enough for us to catch up with him.

Meanwhile, I had informed Sir Herbert Austin, the then Clerk of the Court at the Old Bailey, that Tivendale had broken his recognisances. A notice was issued, calling upon Tivendale to appear at the court on September 15th to receive judgment. No Tivendale appeared, however, because he was still on the run, and the notice could not be served.

Mrs Tivendale was brought before the court as she had stood surety for her husband's bail, but beyond saying she believed he was in a situation at Perth, she had no knowledge of his whereabouts. Nor did enquiries

### *Ugly Lotbario and Old Retainer*

of the Perth police succeed in running the elusive butler to earth.

The months passed with still no trace of Tivendale, and then came the news that he had taken his own life. He had returned home from his last situation, a sick man. Wanted by the police, realising that sooner or later justice would catch up with him, he had decided that death would be preferable—but he ran true to form to the very end. By means of false pretences he obtained four bottles of one of the most deadly poisons, using the name of 'Dale'—the end syllable of Tivendale. When he was discovered by his wife lying dead in bed, he was clutching one of the blue bottles which had contained the poison in his hand.

The 'perfect butler' had run his course, and we were able to close our file on one of the most audacious crooks who ever entered an Old Bailey dock.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE BODY IN THE GARAGE

**J**ANUARY 10TH, 1929, is a date I am not likely to forget; it proved to be a very eventful day in my career. On that morning, having recently returned from a murder investigation at Swansea, I was writing out the details of my expenses in connection with that case, when information reached the Yard that a man had been murdered in one of the Home Counties and his body buried in the same grave as that of a horse.

Chief Inspector John Prothero and I were deputed to make the necessary enquiries. We interrogated one or two people and felt satisfied that there was not a vestige of truth in the story and that no murder had in fact been committed. The woman who laid the information, however, was so insistent that she even swore an affidavit before a Commissioner for Oaths. Enquiry showed that she had a grudge against the world in general and her near neighbour in particular, and eventually she admitted that the whole thing was a complete fabrication.

This matter having been cleared up, we returned to town. As it was a fine day, although somewhat cold, we decided that a walk from the station with a pause for refreshment on the way was just the thing before we settled down to making our report. We thoroughly enjoyed that walk; and, if we did not hasten on our way, well—we had been pretty busy for some weeks past and felt no pang<sup>s</sup> of conscience. On arrival at our head-

## *The Body in the Garage*

quarters we were greeted by Chief Constable Fred Wensley, who informed us that he had been trying to get in touch with us in connection with a murder enquiry.

'Oh, yes?' remarked Protheroe blandly. 'It's quite all right, sir, we've cleared it up.'

Wensley looked at us in surprise. 'What are you talking about?' he asked.

'It isn't murder at all. We've just got back from our investigations and are quite satisfied . . .'

The Chief Constable waved aside the explanation.

'I am not talking about that job,' he said. 'There has been a murder at Southampton and I want you to get on to it right away. Better take Sergeant Young with you.'

So I had three murder enquiries one after the other — off one and on to another without pause. We packed our bags once more, and at 10.30 p.m. caught a train from Waterloo arriving at Southampton at 12.30 a.m. Our first call was at Bargate Police Station, where we found that arrangements had already been made for putting us up. Of course, it was too late to do anything then, but early the next morning we were out on the job, and met Inspector Chatfield, who put us in possession of the main facts of the crime as known at that time.

We learned that the body of one Vivian Messiter had been found the day before (January 10th) lying on the floor of the lock-up garage-cum-storeroom at 42 Grove Street, Southampton, where he carried on business as a local agent of the Wolf's Head Oil Company, whose head offices were in London. Messiter had not been seen alive since he left his lodgings at 3 Carlton Road on the morning of October 30th. He was a quiet man, of regular habits, and when he failed to return home as usual, his landlord, a Mr Parrott, informed the police that Messiter was missing.



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An officer went to the garage to investigate, but on finding the place securely padlocked from the outside, concluded that wherever Messiter might be he was not in the garage.

Mr Parrott then wrote to Messiter's employers telling them of his lodger's absence from home; in reply they asked him to visit the garage to see whether the firm's car was there. By breaking a window and peering through the aperture with the aid of a candle, Mr Parrott was able to see that the car was safe and that nothing appeared to be amiss. Messiter was posted as 'missing' in the *Police Gazette*. No news of him was forthcoming, and it was generally concluded that he had simply walked out of the job for reasons best known to himself, and had perhaps returned to the United States where he had spent many years of his life.

Messiter was a member of an old Somersetshire family. On his mother's side he came from the ancient Shaworth-Musters, and on leaving school went to the States with his brother Edgar. They started a horse-breeding ranch on the Escondido range in New Mexico. Then, when Edgar drifted into mining operations in Colorado, Vivian went into business in Denver. Later on he went to New York City, where the new subway railroad under the Hudson River was in course of construction. Through his energy and ability to handle men of all types he soon rose from a subordinate position to the office of Chief Engineering Constructor. He became so well known in this capacity that engineers from England were invited to meet him. By sheer grit and determination he had reached the top of a highly-specialised profession. He was successful, wealthy and generally prosperous at the outbreak of the First World War.

Without hesitation Messiter threw up everything,

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came home, obtained a commission here and went immediately to the front. He was shot through both thighs and hopelessly crippled. He returned to New York to gather up the broken threads of his life as best he could. From that time onward he lived between New York and this side of the Atlantic, always well employed and successful at whatever job he undertook.

Such a man was Vivian Messiter, last seen alive on October 30th, when he left his lodgings to keep an appointment with someone—nobody knew who at the time—at his Grove Street garage and storeroom.

Weeks went by; *ten* weeks, in fact. Then, on January 10th, 1929, the Wolf's Head Oil Company sent a Mr Passmore to take over Messiter's agency and open up the business again at their Southampton Branch. With a friend, Mr Passmore gained entry to the outer yard of the garage via the roof of the *Royal Exchange* public house next door. With the aid of a local builder the padlock on the garage door was forced.

The two men entering the garage had not the faintest suspicion of foul play; there was no reason why they should have. Mr Passmore had simply been told to gain entry and check up on the stock and other details. The first thing he did was to examine the car. He tried to start it up without success. He examined the tank and found it empty. It was not until he pushed his way between the car and the stacked-up oil drums and packing-cases which lined the sides of the garage, and got behind the vehicle, that he realised he was in the presence of tragedy. He called out to his friend, who joined him, and together they gazed down at the floor with startled eyes. There, lying on the concrete, was the body of a man—the late Vivian Messiter.

Such was the story we heard from the lips of Inspector

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Chatfield, supplemented by one or two gruesome details. The body was in a pretty bad state of decomposition owing to the length of time it had lain in the garage undiscovered. Moreover, rats had been busy, so that the features of the dead man were unrecognisable. From the post-mortem examination it appeared that Messiter had been shot through the head, but although a search was made for a firearm, no trace of one was found.

The Inspector handed us certain articles which were found on the seat of the car in the garage. One was a duplicate order book, the other a memorandum book about the size of an ordinary exercise book. This latter, in fact, both at the inquest proceedings and at the trial, was always referred to as the 'exercise' book. From both books pages had been torn out, and it looked as though somebody had been anxious to destroy whatever details or information these pages contained.

On one page of the exercise book was a receipt signed by a Mr H. H. Galton for 2s. 6d. commission on the sale of five gallons of oil. It was dated *October 30th*, the last day on which Messiter was seen alive. The next page had been torn out, but on the following page were the words: 'Cromer & Bartlett, 25 Bold Street, 5 gallons, heavy.' Mr Galton, of course, was interviewed, and had no difficulty in accounting for his whereabouts on October 30th, so that we were satisfied he had nothing to do with the crime. It was obvious that this one sheet bearing the signature of Galton had been deliberately left in that book to direct suspicion against an innocent man. The other pages had been roughly torn out.

In the duplicate order book there was no writing of any kind, but tucked away at the end of the book were two sheets of carbon paper upon which could just be deciphered certain names and addresses.

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The name of 'Cromer & Bartlett' of 25 Bold Street, Southampton, was repeated. Then there was a note, 'Sold to Ben Baskerfield, Clayton Farm, Bentley Road, near Winchester,' and yet another entry, 'Ben Jervis, Crescent Bassett, 5 gallons number 8 at 5s.6d.' Later investigations revealed, however, that there was no such street as Bold Street in Southampton, nor any firm bearing the name of Cromer & Bartlett; nor was there any such place as Clayton Farm anywhere near Winchester, while Ben Jervis had never been heard of at Crescent Bassett.

All these entries, with the exception of Mr Galton's signature, were in the dead man's handwriting, and we found it difficult to conceive that he himself would write false names and addresses in his books unless he had been given them by somebody else. Who was that somebody else? That was obviously one of the main questions to be answered.

First of all, however, we had the unpleasant task of going to the mortuary and viewing the body. I examined the report of the police surgeon saying that the dead man had been shot. The next thing was to examine his clothes and anything else which might afford a clue. Our immediate anxiety was to find the bullet which had killed Messiter. That a shot had been fired seemed absolutely certain from our enquiries in the immediate neighbourhood, for several people who were interviewed declared they heard a revolver shot. They insisted they had actually heard it, although their times varied. One woman gave the time as two o'clock in the morning, about the date of the murder, and when I asked her what she was doing running around at that hour of the morning, she explained that her husband was not very well and she had got up to make him a cup of tea.

As the Southampton police had already made an

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unsuccessful search for a firearm, it seemed probable that the murderer, after committing the crime, had pocketed the gun, carefully padlocked the garage doors and outer gates after him, and then departed. We did not under-rate our difficulties as we made our way to 42 Grove Street to examine the scene of the crime. Ten weeks had elapsed since the killing of Vivian Messiter: ten weeks during which every clue had become cold and the murderer had had ample time to make his get-away.

The garage was a long, narrow building with white-washed walls. Along the right-hand side as you went in was a double row of large oil drums upon which boxes were piled. At the far end boxes were stacked on either side, reaching almost to the beamed ceiling and obscuring any view from the end side window. It was in a sort of recess between boxes at the furthest end of the garage that the body of Messiter was found, lying on its back, face upwards. The firm's car was parked in front of the body, concealing it from sight of anyone entering the premises.

There is nothing like the reconstruction of a crime to help form conclusions on the probable way it was committed, and we decided to carry out a reconstruction on the spot. To this end we prevailed upon Mr Hall, the genial licensee of the next-door public house, to enact the part of the corpse by lying down in a position similar to that in which the body was found. A trilby hat had been found near Messiter's head, and to give a touch of realism to the scene for photographic purposes, I placed my own hat beside the recumbent figure of Mr Hall. The official photographer then got busy. We noted the position of several bloodstained boxes in relation to the body and then organised a team of searchers to look for the bullet. Not a trace of one was found.

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'Move all drums and boxes and search every nook and cranny,' commanded my chief—'Gentleman John,' as he was sometimes called because of his cultured accent. There began a systematic shifting of the stacks of boxes and oil drums. It was during this removal that three clues were found which were destined to play a vital part in our investigations. I will deal with them in the order of their finding, although it was the third clue which provided the most important information of all.

The first was a rolled-up ball of paper stained and begrimed with oil and dirt, lying between two oil drums a foot or two inside the garage door. It was a receipt for rent given by somebody named 'Horne,' was dated October 20th, and bore the address 5 Cranbury Avenue. On the back of this scrap of paper were several lines of writing barely discernible because of the oil and dirt. As far as they could be deciphered the words referred to an order for '35 or 36 gals Tuesday,' and there was a signature—'W. F. Thomas'—the small 'o' being obliterated.

Here was a find indeed—a name and an address! A call at 5 Cranbury Avenue established that a Mr and Mrs Thomas, described by Mrs Horne the landlady as a quiet and well-behaved couple, *had* stayed there for about a fortnight. They left on November 3rd, leaving an address to which letters were to be sent on. The address was c/o Allied Transport Co., 38 High Road, Chiswick. The Chiswick police made enquiries and found that there was neither a firm of the name given, nor a house bearing that number; so that it looked as if Mr Thomas was anxious to cover up his tracks.

There had been a second scrap of paper found behind an oil drum. This was a note which read: 'Mr W. F. Thomas. I shall be at 42 Grove Street at 10 a.m. but not

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at noon. V. Messiter.' The link between Thomas and Messiter was now definitely established.

The third clue found in the garage was a hammer, lying at the back of some oil drums against the side wall of the premises. Both the shaft and the head of the hammer were stained with blood, and adhering to the head was a single eyebrow hair, similar in colour to that of the dead man.

The discovery of the hammer threw an entirely different light on the crime, for it showed that Messiter had *not* died from a gunshot wound at all and that the bullet we had been seeking was non-existent. The late Sir Bernard Spilsbury, called in to make a second post-mortem examination, found fractures to the skull and injuries to the brain caused by blows on the head with some heavy instrument. We produced the hammer found in the garage. He examined it, scrutinised the dead man's injuries again, and then declared that those injuries could have been caused by the hammer he held in his hand.

We turned our attention to the room where Messiter had lodged at 3 Carlton Road. Among the papers he had left behind we found a letter bearing the address 5 Cranbury Avenue, and signed 'W. F. Thomas.' The writer was applying for an agency with Messiter in reply to an advertisement which the latter had inserted in the *Southern Daily Echo* inviting applications. Here was another link between Thomas and Messiter, and it became more urgent than ever that we should get in touch with the elusive W. F. Thomas. On January 16th, we issued as full a description as possible of him to the Press throughout the country, mentioning a scar on his face. The newspapers immediately seized upon this item to spur their readers into a 'Hunt for Man with a Scar.'

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Going over all the titbits of information in our possession, I could not help feeling that the man we wanted was no novice in crime: it seemed clear from his resourcefulness in inventing bogus orders to get commission; his flight from one place to another; the tearing out of what were probably incriminating leaves from the books found on the seat of the car, and the cunning way in which he tried to cover his tracks. I mentioned the idea to my chief. 'He may be a man with a record,' I said. 'If he is, then we shall have him in our files,' I said.

'Send for Battley,' he replied, and a call to the Yard brought Inspector Harry Battley, the then head of the Fingerprint Bureau, to Southampton, where he examined for fingerprints the hammer-shaft and the exercise and memorandum books. Unfortunately no prints were found, but in the meantime my chief had got in touch with the Criminal Record Office and asked them to send down the files of all the men named Thomas. This was done and it became our tedious duty to look through the eighty-odd dossiers sent down to us.

Each file contained official photographs of the man whose criminal record it contained. We showed them to Mrs Horne, who would have known her lodger if she had seen a picture of him among this crook's gallery; she did not recognise any one of them. We showed them to other people who might have seen Thomas at the garage, but in every case we drew a blank. Of course we were well aware that the name Thomas might be an *alias*, and that any search would not help us unless we knew the name under which he had been convicted. For the moment we were right up against it, and there seemed only one thing to do—go over again all the clues in our possession.

There was the oil-grimed ball of paper (the Horne



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receipt) with its barely-discernible writing on the back. I decided to take it up to the British Museum to see if the experts there could assist us. I knew that they were used to dealing with spoiled documents recovered from ancient tombs, and remembered that at that very moment they were engaged in deciphering the hieroglyphics on some of the age-old documents taken from the tomb of Tutankhamen. My journey proved fruitless: they were quite ready to assist, but the removal of sump oil and grease was not exactly in their line, especially as they realised how important it was that the writing should not be obliterated in the process.

I was convinced that the paper held a message which would prove of importance at some stage of our enquiry, so Dr Charles Ainsworth Mitchell, secretary of the Society of Public Analysts, and Doctor of Science, Oxford, was approached. He treated the paper, removing some of the stains and the oil and grease. When that had been done the words became clearer and easier to read, and by comparing the signature on the back of the scrap of paper with the indisputable signature of Thomas on the letter written by him to Messiter, it became crystal-clear that they had been written by the same hand. We *must* find and question Thomas.

Four days had elapsed since we began our enquiries, and so far they had been of the hard-slogging routine nature which are the foundation of all police investigations. One may have a hunch as a result of the intuition acquired through experience, but it is the painstaking, monotonous and often dreary routine enquiries, which yield the surest results in the long run.

On January 16th we received a message from the Wiltshire police that they were also looking for a man named Thomas, who had worked for a building contrac-

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tor named Mitchell, at Downton, near Salisbury. Thomas had entered the employ of Mr Mitchell on November 3rd, 1928 (the date on which Thomas left his lodgings at Cranbury Avenue) and had defamed with over £130 of his employer's money on December 21st. That this was the same man we were seeking became evident when we learned that he, too, had given his previous employers as the Allied Transport Road Association, of *Bold Street*, Southampton.

We went to Downton, and were lucky enough to find the landlady with whom 'Mr and Mrs Thomas' had lodged. In a vase in the room they had occupied I found yet another scrap of paper—this case seems full of them—which I unfolded carefully. It was a docket from an order book, and bore at the top the heading:

### 'AUTO & RADIO SERVICES'

Underneath was an address: '85 London Road, Manchester.' There was a line for the insertion of a date, and lower down:

'Sold to

Sold by

Received by

I rang up the police at Manchester. Did they know a W. F. Thomas? They did not! I told them the nature of the enquiry I was making regarding the theft of money from Thomas's employers, and mentioned the discovery of the docket. This rang a bell in the mind of the officer at the other end of the line. 'Oh,' he said, 'Auto & Radio Services? We are looking for a man named *Podmore* who was in their employ. He is wanted for conversion of

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money he received for a car. His pictures appeared in the *Police Gazette*. . .'

That was enough for me. I looked Podmore up in records. Sure enough, W. F. Thomas and William Henry Podmore were one and the same person. Even so, although we were certain by this time that Thomas or Podmore was the man who had battered Vivian Messiter to death, the evidence was not yet sufficient to warrant an arrest. So far there was nothing to connect him with the hammer which had killed Messiter, and there were still many enquiries to make before the crime could be brought home to him.

We began to check up on his history, and managed to build up a fair picture of the man we wanted, with the aid of the Staffordshire police, to whom he was quite well known, having been in their hands on and off from the age of eleven. He was married, but had left his wife. At the time of our enquiries he was known to be living with a young woman with whom he had stayed in various parts of the country. This was only of general interest as showing the man's character, and in answer to our questions the Staffordshire police provided more immediate relevant information.

Podmore had at one time lived with his parents at Greasley Road, Abbey Milton, Stoke-on-Trent. Quite near to his home was a *Bold Street*, the street which kept on cropping up in this case. We also discovered that Podmore was well known to a Mr Baskeyfield, whom he always called Baskerfield, the name of the person mentioned as living at the Clayton Farm address, while a Mr Albert Machen, who actually lived at *Clayton Farm*, Newcastle, Staffs, used to deliver milk to the Podmore family. Mrs Lucy Jervis (whose name also figured on the sheets of carbon paper) recognised Podmore as one

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of the family although she had never spoken to him personally.

It was, therefore, quite easy to understand the glibness with which Thomas, or Podmore, had trotted out these names and addresses to cover up the bogus orders for oil on which he had drawn commission.

In our search for W. F. Thomas, *alias* William Henry Podmore (who, we were now convinced, had battered Vivian Messiter to death in the garage at Southampton), we adopted an aphorism often useful in police investigations as well as elsewhere: *cherchez la femme*. We knew he was living with a young woman named 'Lil' (the Press gave her the glamorous soubriquet of 'Golden-haired Lil') and we decided that if we could trace 'Lil' our chance of running Podmore to earth would be greatly increased. To this end we again enlisted the aid of the Staffordshire police, who made enquiries at Podmore's Hanley home. Detective Inspector Diggle discovered that the wanted man had stayed there over Christmas, but had left in the New Year to take a situation as garage hand at the Stonebridge Hotel, Solihull, near Birmingham.

Enquiries showed that Podmore had arrived there on January 5th, 1929, with his 'wife' (Lil) who was to act as cook. Six days later, when the evening papers came out with reports of the garage murder, Podmore read the account and at once handed in his notice, saying he wanted to leave at once. The next day Podmore and Lil, without even waiting to collect the wages due to them, vanished. It was at this point that Podmore evidently became thoroughly scared and started on a panic flight, for he sent Lil back to her home at Stoke-on-Trent, where she was interviewed by Detective Inspector Diggle.

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She told the officer she thought it likely that Podmore would be found at the Leicester Hotel, Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, where they had stayed together on a previous occasion. A 'phone call to London sent Detective Inspector Charles Simmons at once to the hotel, where he saw Podmore, who agreed to go to Southampton for questioning.

On January 18th, just eight days after the finding of Messiter's dead body, I saw Podmore for the first time at Bargate Police Station. I was there with my chief, Inspector Prothero, to take down any statement he might be disposed to make.

The thing that most impressed me about Podmore when he was ushered into the room where we sat, was his nonchalant, almost cocksure attitude. He was obviously used to being interviewed by police officers, and was by no means overawed at the prospect of again having to go through what would have been an ordeal to most people. He gave us a half-smile as he took a seat, with perhaps a trace of defiance in it. Then he said, very quickly: 'I don't know what I have to say to you, but I am ready to answer any questions.'

My chief issued the formal caution, to which Podmore replied: 'I would like to tell my story in my own way, starting from Manchester where the trouble began.'

He then began to talk, and as I took down his words it became clear to me that here was a transparent liar. Of all the hundreds of persons we interviewed in the course of our enquiries, Podmore was the only one who could remember, with the utmost clarity and to the very minute, what he was doing months before. There was no hesitation about him nor any fumbling for times, dates or words. What is more, he was most insistent

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that he should read every sentence of his story as it was written down.

It was, for all that, a very resourceful statement, revealing a cunning and subtle mind at work. Of course, he knew the hunt was on the moment he read about the discovery of Messiter's body and fled so hurriedly from Salisbury, so that he had had eight clear days to invent what he believed to be a plausible story. As I wrote down his statement I was impressed with its glibness, but there were several ends which needed tying up.

With a show of utter frankness he admitted he had assumed the name of Thomas, saying that he knew that the Manchester police held a warrant for his arrest in the name of Podmore, in connection with the theft of monies from the Auto & Radio Services, Manchester. With equal frankness he admitted his employment by Messiter, adding that when he went to see the latter on the morning of the murder there was an agent named 'Maxton, or Baxton' talking to his employer. 'This agent,' declared Podmore, 'was writing something in a book,' thereby subtly suggesting that Maxton, or Baxton, might have killed Messiter (in fact, although we tried hard to find anybody of something like this name in connection with Messiter, either as agent or in any other capacity, Maxton, or Baxton, remained completely without trace).

Podmore, however, proceeded to give a most detailed description of the man, even to his height and build and the clothes he was wearing. In a subsequent statement he gave his reasons for leaving Messiter's employ and taking the job with Mr Mitchell at Salisbury: it was 'to better himself.' He admitted taking Messiter's car and going to see Mr Mitchell, at Downton, on October 30th, the last day on which Messiter was seen alive, and said

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that when he returned about 4.30 p.m. on that day, he put the car in the yard and joined his 'wife' at their lodgings.

In its way this was a tacit admission that he was the last person to be with Messiter on October 30th. We put two and two together, and noticed a possible motive for the crime. From the bogus orders, under the bogus names and addresses found on the sheets of carbon paper, it was obvious that Podmore had used his cunning brain to obtain quick and easy money by collecting commission on non-existent orders for oil. The amount was not great, but perhaps his frauds had been discovered and Messiter had challenged him with them. However, whether or not this was the motive, our job was to find the murderer; and if it could be established that the hammer which had inflicted those terrible injuries on the dead man was, at some time before October 30th, in Podmore's possession, then another link in our chain of evidence would be forged.

Photographs of the hammer were taken and issued to the Press. They appeared in almost every newspaper in the country. The response was immediate.

A Mr Henry Marsh came forward to say that the hammer was his. He had bought it in France and recognised it because it had been 'touched up and filed down' by him. Some time round October 29th a man with a scar, who 'looked like a motor mechanic,' had come to the Morris Motor Works where he was employed at the welding bench, and asked to borrow a hammer. He lent the stranger the hammer, and it was never returned.

The Morris Motor Works were about a mile and a half from the Grove Street Garage, and it looked very much as though Podmore had borrowed it, not for the purpose of carrying out some slight adjustment on his

## *The Body in the Garage*

car, but with the intention of using it as a weapon upon Vivian Messiter. In other words, the crime was premeditated. This seemed particularly plausible if Podmore suspected his employer of discovering that the orders on which he drew commission were bogus orders, and Podmore may have seen a danger sign in Messiter's terse note found in the garage: 'I shall be at 42 Grove Street at 10 a.m., but not at noon.'

It was at this point that we struck something of a snag. Podmore was put up for identification with several other men of similar build and appearance. Mr Marsh went along the line but was unable to pick him out as the man to whom he had lent the hammer. In his statement, Podmore denied that he had ever borrowed a hammer. He used one already in the garage for opening the packing-cases—a two-pound hammer, ordinary in shape, bow-nosed and square at the other end. Now the only other hammer found in the garage, apart from that recognised by Marsh, was a comparatively light one weighing only three-quarters of a pound.

Meanwhile, the Manchester police executed the warrant for Podmore's arrest, and on January 29th he was sent to prison for six months for stealing a car. We continued our investigations. We went over every clue and every bit of information in our possession. The inquest on Vivian Messiter, which had been formally opened and adjourned, was resumed on March 6th. It was a long and exhaustive inquiry which was attended by Podmore, who came from prison for the purpose and sat between two prison officers. 'Golden-haired Lil' was also present throughout the hearings and the two exchanged smiles and hand-waves each morning when the court opened.

The inquest was not without its sensations—illus-



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trating some of the red-herrings which are dragged across the path of police officers when engaged on an enquiry of this sort. A man who was then a prisoner in Winchester Gaol reported to us that a woman he knew had returned home at 2.30 a.m. on October 30th and that she had 'blood all over her face.' The man was called before the Coroner and admitted that his story was an invention; but, of course, all such reports and allegations have to be carefully investigated, and as in this case a good deal of time is often spent eliminating this person or that from suspicion.

During the inquest proceedings the exercise book containing the receipt from Mr Galton for 2s. 6d. was produced and examined by the jury, as were the two sheets of carbon paper found in the duplicate order book. After the inquest was over and the jury had returned an open verdict, these exhibits were returned to us. What happened then was little short of miraculous.

We were back once more at Scotland Yard, going over every clue and every bit of information in our possession: Prothero and myself, with Harry Battley, head of the Fingerprint Bureau. My chief picked up the exercise book and opened it. He sauntered across to the window which looked out on to the Embankment and across the Thames. Battley and I followed him. We had nothing in mind at the moment except to scrutinise more closely and perhaps in better light the pages of that book, which we must have gazed on a score of times during our investigations.

Suddenly, as Prothero held the book up to the light, a ray striking the paper slantwise seemed to throw up in relief the shadowy outline of some writing on the page on which our eyes were focused. It was not actual writing, but only the very faint impression left on the

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page underneath the one which had been torn out, and on which the actual message had been written.

To the naked eye, the impressions were not legible, and they only became a shade more visible by holding the book so that the light fell obliquely across the page. It was a moment of tense excitement. 'We must get it photographed,' said Prothero. So James O'Brien, one of the Yard's experts in photography, took a preliminary photograph there and then, by oblique light from a 2,000-candle-power arc-lamp.

Faintly, but unmistakably, shadowy words appeared on the resultant print. They read: 'October 28 1928. Received from Wolfe Head Oil Company commission on Cromer and Bartlett, 5 gals 5/6 commission 2/6.' Then below were the initials 'W.F.T.'

To corroborate these findings and leave no possible doubt, the exercise book was sent to Dr Ainsworth Mitchell and Mr Bernard Ellis, the two experts who had dealt with the two scraps of paper found in the garage and enabled us to decipher the writing upon them. They too took photographs of the indentations, and after comparing the writing with the admitted writing of Thomas, Dr Mitchell declared that they were both written by the same hand.

The reason why we considered this evidence so vital, apart from establishing still further the business association of Thomas and Messiter, was that it proved that Thomas's hand had torn the tell-tale pages from that silent witness. For if Thomas (Podmore) was in fact the murderer, he would have good reason to destroy every bit of written evidence which might reveal his relationship with Messiter. If, on the other hand, somebody other than Thomas was the murderer, what conceivable motive could he have in tearing out the pages containing

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details of the transactions between Thomas and the dead man?

Of course, the fact that Thomas had defrauded his master was no proof that he had also killed him; but the circumstances were such as to leave no doubt in our minds that he had, and I remember the clarity with which Lord Hewart, the then Lord Chief Justice, who presided at the trial of Podmore, stressed the value of circumstantial evidence during his summing-up.

'One cannot forget that an eye-witness may sometimes be mistaken,' he pointed out. 'There may be a mistake about a person; there may be a mistake about an act; there may be the influence of grudge or spite. Circumstantial evidence is free from these blemishes. Circumstantial evidence consists of this: that when you look at all the surrounding circumstances you find such a series of undesigned, unexpected coincidences that as a reasonable person you find yourself compelled to one conclusion . . . Now nobody here, nobody in this case, professes to have seen any blow struck upon Mr Messiter. What is said is that when you bring an impartial mind to bear upon all the available material in this case, you are driven to the conclusion that this act was done by one man and one man alone.'

To return to our enquiries, a recapitulation of the facts so far known may be helpful. Podmore obtained employment with Messiter at Southampton in the name of Thomas. He obtained commission on bogus orders. On Tuesday, October 30th, Messiter was murdered. No money was found upon his body or in the garage; but that evening Podmore paid a week's rent which was due on the previous Saturday. Meanwhile he had obtained another job with Mr Mitchell, at Downton, near Salisbury; on November 3rd he left his lodgings to take up

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this job, leaving with his landlady, Mrs Horne, a false address at Chiswick for the forwarding of any letters.

At Downton he stole about £150 from his employer and was questioned by the police, after which he at once fled to the Stonebridge hotel, reverting to his real name, Podmore. This was doubtless because he knew the Wiltshire police would be looking for a man named Thomas, but then, he also knew that the Manchester police already had a warrant out for his arrest in the name of Podmore.

The inference was that he preferred to face charges of theft rather than the more serious crime of murder, and that he had switched names so that he would not be connected with the killing of Messiter?

Somebody had evidently taken great pains to remove from the exercise and duplicate order books all the pages containing the damning evidence of Thomas's association with Messiter. It seemed beyond doubt that this was done by Podmore: not, as was later suggested by the defence, to cover up his fraudulent transactions, but to enable him to vanish from the scene of the crime without a single trace being left behind.

Those books were found on the seat of the car, behind which lay the body of the murdered Messiter. Only one order page containing writing was left in those books—that which bore the signature of the innocent Mr Galton—implying that the murderer deliberately left those books where they were found in the hopes of implicating Galton.

But he overlooked the two sheets of carbon paper containing those fatal impressions of name and places known only to himself; just as he overlooked those two dirty scraps of paper found on the sawdust- and oil-begrimed floor of the garage. This negligence signed his

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death warrant, however, for these were the main factors leading to the conclusion that Podmore was the man who had battered Vivian Messiter to death on October 30th.

It is no light matter to prepare a report containing all the essential facts on the basis of which such a conclusion is reached. The statements of all the witnesses have to be taken and checked, after which they are submitted to the superior officers in Scotland Yard, and there discussed in conference so that every point is crystal-clear. Then the completed report has to be sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions for consideration, and it is he, a man of legal eminence, skilled in weighing up the value of evidence as it must be presented before a learned judge, who has to decide whether or not a prosecution should be brought.

While this procedure was being carried out, Podmore had left prison after serving his sentence for the Manchester offence, and was at once re-arrested by the Wiltshire police. This time he was brought up at the Old Bailey, where he received a further six months imprisonment for the theft at Downton.

While serving this sentence in Wandsworth Prison he was indiscreet enough to boast to other prisoners of having got away with the Southampton murder. One of these men named Cummings reported that, while they were discussing the case, Podmore had told him that if Messiter's watch and keys were found he (Podmore) 'would be guilty of murder.'

It was during October that Cummings was seen and a statement taken from him regarding these conversations in prison. But it was not till December 17th, 1929, that Inspector Prothero and I made our way to the gates of Wandsworth Gaol and arrested Podmore as he left

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there on completing the sentence passed upon him at the Old Bailey.

In accordance with regulations, the prisoner had first to be released and the arrest made outside the prison gates. Just before leaving the building, I observed through a window a strange apparition. It was a young man dressed in plus fours, wearing a long, highly-coloured tartan scarf, the ends of which hung down almost to his knees; he was standing near a big racing type of car. There were only two people in the vicinity as we prepared to take our departure, the driver of the police car and this distinctive-looking individual. The Senior Prison Officer was asked whether he knew him and assured us that he did not, but suggested he might be there to meet a prisoner on release. He felt quite sure he was not a Press man, and he certainly did not look like any of those gentlemen I had met either on this or any other case.

We carried on with the arrest, the prisoner showing a natural resentment at this unexpected interruption to his freedom. I am certain Podmore felt confident of having covered his tracks so completely that he had nothing more to fear in connection with the Messiter murder, and it came as something of a shock to find us waiting outside the gaol on his release. For the moment it looked as though he might become violent, so I whipped the handcuffs on to his wrists, clicked them on to my own and ushered him into the back seat of the car, my chief getting in the front seat with the driver.

We started off for Southampton, and had not gone far on our journey when Podmore complained that he felt cold. At the same time he looked out of the back window of the car and drew our attention to a car which he declared was following us. I looked round and saw

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our tartan-scarfed, plus-foured gentleman, pounding along behind us in his racing car.

We decided to stop at the first police station to borrow a blanket. We did so, and saw the racing car go whizzing past. Having borrowed our blanket, we set off again, but we had only covered a short distance when the racing car reappeared and continued to follow us. Not far from London an argument took place between the prisoner and the police driver as to the quickest way to Southampton. They were both very confident they knew the best route; the prisoner was emphatic that we should take the left fork a little farther on, while the driver was equally emphatic that the right fork was the road to take. It was a strange journey indeed, having this handcuffed murderer arguing vehemently with a police officer about the quickest route—to the gallows, as it turned out.

As we approached the forked roads in dispute, Prothero ordered the driver to pull up and see what the sign-post said. A weather-beaten wooden arm bearing the one word, Southampton, indicated the right fork, and so we took that direction—much to the annoyance of Podmore, who, as if to clinch matters, remarked: 'I ought to know. I always took the left fork *when I pinched cars in London.*'

Leaving it at that, we drove on, still pursued by the tartan-scarfed gentleman, until some way along the road the car suddenly broke down and came to a silent and ominous halt.

The driver got down to discover what was wrong.

'I know all about cars,' declared Podmore (he was, in fact, a motor mechanic), 'let me have a go.'

Handcuffed together we got out of the car and the prisoner began to exercise his blandishments on the

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immobile vehicle. Still it refused to budge. Up rolled our plus-foured friend, still wound round with the tartan scarf.

'Perhaps I can help you,' he said in a broad Scottish accent.

'Who are you?' I demanded. It seemed an appropriate moment to find out who he was, and why he was following us.

'Norman Rae of the *Evening Standard*,' he replied briskly.

Well—there it was. It was clear that he was aware of our mission and that we had no power to do anything about it. Behold, then, the police driver, the Press and Podmore, in blissful combination to rectify the defect—which turned out to be an air-lock—so that we could continue our journey to Southampton.

I learned later that when he saw us pull up at the sign-post, Norman Rae also pulled up; and when he observed that Southampton was our destination he put two and two together, managed somehow to get a message through to his office, with the result that the *Evening Standard* had a complete beat on all its rivals for two editions, which were specially published. Norman was the motoring correspondent for the *Evening Standard* at that time, and this was one of his earliest jobs as a crime reporter. Today he is the chief crime reporter on the *News of the World*, and I should imagine he is still the only reporter who has assisted a handcuffed murderer to repair a police car driving a murderer to his doom as it turned out.

Eventually we reached and entered Bargate Police Station, where I had last seen Podmore nearly twelve months before. He was charged with the murder of Messiter and brought up at Southampton Police Court



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and subsequently appeared in the historic Assize Court at Winchester to be tried for his life.

The trial of the drab little figure of Podmore amid the ancient splendours of this, the oldest Assize Court in the country, struck an almost ludicrous note. Before the proceedings began, liveried pike-men escorted the red-robed, portly figure of Lord Hewart through the precincts of Winchester Castle—founded, so legend has it, by King Arthur in the year 528. The picturesque procession passed through St Stephen's Hall, on the western wall of which still hangs King Arthur's famous Round Table. At one time the Assizes were held in this very hall, and history records that Henry III sat there in person in 1216 to preside over a gang of robbers and cut-throats. Today judges sit in a court of more recent structure, but the pageantry still goes on and the surroundings are the same as existed all those centuries ago.

It was in this court, then, that Podmore, dwarfed by the dock in which he stood, faced his trial. He elected to go into the witness-box to give evidence on his own behalf, and was submitted to a gruelling cross-examination; but it was five questions, put to him by the scarlet-robed figure on the bench, which finally sealed his doom.

He admitted that he had taken the car from the garage for his drive to Downton on the afternoon of October 30th, and said that later he had left it in the yard because the garage doors were locked.

'Is it or is it not a fact that Messiter was killed before you took that car from the garage or shortly after you brought it back?' asked the judge in dulcet tones.

'I don't know,' came the reply. 'He was not killed before I took the car, and I did not see him after I left the garage in the morning.'

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'Did you say, "That man owes me money for work done?"'

'Yes.'

'Is it true?'

'Only in the sense that I had repaired the magneto and thought I should have some recompense.'

'Did you make any enquiry as to where he had gone?'

'No—I did not.'

'Did you communicate with the Wolf's Head Oil Company?'

'I did not know their address.'

Podmore seemed to be getting the drift of the questions, and, scenting the danger, floundered.

'I'm afraid you are taking me out of my depth,' he remonstrated. 'I can't answer.'

He had said enough! After closing speeches of counsel and a lucid summing-up by the Lord Chief Justice, Podmore was found guilty and sentenced to death. A month later he was hanged at Winchester prison.





*Left:* Henry Raymond Brownlow watching the pigeons, perhaps waiting for another sort of pigeon to pluck!



*Right:* Another confidence trickster, William Reuben. This photograph was actually taken while he was in course of trying to swindle a prospective victim.



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report of an investigation, or when giving evidence during a trial. There must be no bias against a prisoner in the dock, although there must also, of course, be no pulling of punches in presenting a case at its full strength. The learned judge as well as defending counsel will see that one does not overstep the mark.

I mention this to show that no malice animated me when, in my new rank and on a bright July day in 1930, I saw of a prisoner who stood in the dock of the famous No. 1 Court at the Old Bailey: 'The prisoner, a religious hypocrite, an unscrupulous scoundrel, a perjurer of the worst description.' I was simply told the court the result of my enquiries into the unwholesome past of Martin Sebastian Saldanha, one-time barrister and member of the Inner Temple, who had just been found guilty of perjury.

'Speak as you find,' is an axiom which must be strictly adhered to by a police officer when giving evidence as to the character of a person charged with a criminal offence. He must give the known facts about the prisoner, as recorded in the files at Scotland Yard, and as discovered through his own personal enquiries. Such evidence, it must be stressed, is only given at the end of a trial, after a jury (or bench of magistrates in a lower court) have heard all the evidence on both sides and are satisfied of the guilt of the prisoner against whom they have returned a verdict of 'Guilty.'

Then, and only then, is the officer in the case called to the witness-box to unfold the criminal history, if any, of the man in the dock, and to give the court all the information he can concerning the prisoner's antecedents and general character. He does not confine himself to the darker side only of the man's history, but will bring forward any extenuating circumstances he may know of

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as a result of his personal enquiries. It has given me pleasure more than once to be able to speak a good word for a convicted person: sometimes a man who, after falling once from grace, has turned over a new leaf for several years, only to succumb again to temptation. On investigation I have sometimes found that the accused had definitely tried to go straight, had applied himself to honest work, and then, perhaps through hard luck or ill health, fallen back into his old ways.

In such a case I have visited the man's employers, and told them the plain facts, mentioning that the probation officer feels certain he can help the man to keep on the rails in future, and then asking if they would take the man back into their employment in the event of his being 'bound over.' I am glad to say that in many instances employers, showing a fine sense of humanity, have agreed to give the accused another chance, and on being called into the witness-box, I have been able to tell the court:

'I find that since the prisoner's last conviction he has endeavoured to go straight. He has been in regular employment and given every satisfaction. His employers say they are willing to take him back if a certain course is taken.' (The 'certain course' is to put the prisoner on probation for a stated period, during which the probation officer will discreetly and unostentatiously keep a watchful eye upon him.)

But there were no redeeming features about Saldanha, of whom I uttered the words earlier quoted. He had made no attempt to curb his criminal activities or live an honest and respectable life. Far from showing any restraint, he made progress in his villainy, at the same time displaying a subtle inventive genius in the stories he told to obtain money from his victims. Instead of feeling

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any regret for his exploits, he prided himself on their success, and it was because of this that I had to use the words I did, when he stood convicted of impudent and blatant perjury.

Martin Sebastian Saldanha was a coloured man, born at Bangalore, Southern India, in 1873. He came of excellent family, and received his education at Madras College, where he passed his matriculation degree at the age of fifteen. Ten years later he obtained his B.A., and decided to study for the Roman Catholic Church. It was during these days as a theological student that he first betrayed signs of that unstable moral sense which was to land him in gaol for the first time. He had to leave college owing to misconduct, and decided to come to England.

Arriving here in 1902, he applied to the Inner Temple for admission as a student, giving his age as twenty-nine. He studied for three years, and in 1905 was called to the Bar, becoming a fully-fledged barrister.

These brief details of his origin and upbringing will show that Saldanha was a brilliant man who, had he applied his genius in the right direction, might have carved out a brilliant career for himself at the Bar. I have often wondered whether he ever appeared on counsel's benches in any of the courts at the Old Bailey, before he appeared in the dock there with unpleasant regularity.

After being called to the Bar, he practised in the Ealing district of London. He married in 1902, but was left a widower in 1914. It was after the death of his wife that he first came to the notice of the police.

In 1919, a complaint was received concerning the registration of the births of three children. The circumstances were rather shocking. It appeared that soon after his wife's death Saldanha had taken into his home as ward an attractive young niece aged sixteen. He was



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supposed to be the girl's guardian, but lost little time in seducing her, with the result that a child was born in 1917. This child Saldanha registered himself, giving totally false particulars to the registrar. A year later, 1918, twins were born to the ward—who was still in her teens. They were a boy and a girl, and at Saldanha's suggestion the mother of the children registered them herself, in the surname of Martyn.

Saldanha was the father of these three children, all of them born to his ward before she reached the age of twenty. In consequence of the complaint the barrister was charged with giving false particulars of the first child to the registrar of births, and with inciting his niece to give false particulars regarding the birth of the twins. He was brought up at the Old Bailey and sent to prison for six months, in March, 1920; two months later he was disbarred by the Benchers of Inner Temple.

It was perhaps a mercy that the twins died while their father was still serving his sentence, for he had little affection for his offspring, and left their mother to fend for herself. Towards the end of 1920, this unhappy girl obtained an order against Saldanha for the payment of ten shillings a week in support of the one surviving child, but he never kept up the payments, and twice in the next few years suffered imprisonment for being in arrears.

Meanwhile, the firm of solicitors whom the barrister had engaged to defend him at the Old Bailey, and who had briefed Sir Edward Marshall Hall on his behalf, tried in vain to get payment for the costs of his defence. Saldanha simply declined to pay, and the solicitors had a Bankruptcy Notice served upon him, to be heard at Brentford County Court.

This did not worry Saldanha. He breezed up to the

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court on August 6th, 1921, and before a Commissioner for Oaths swore an affidavit declaring that he was not domiciled in this country, and that he was in fact an 'Additional Attaché' to the Spanish Embassy. On these grounds he claimed diplomatic immunity and all the rights and privileges to which members of the Diplomatic Corps of any nation are entitled.

Ten days later he again attended the court in order to file an affidavit. This time it was one purporting to have been sworn before a London Commissioner for Oaths by the Secretary to the Spanish Embassy, one Eduardo de Pena. According to this document, M. de Pena had known Saldanha for over twenty years, and corroborated that he was properly entitled to diplomatic immunity: on the face of it a most valuable document, giving official support to Saldanha's claim.

But the latter was not yet finished with affidavits. He went to yet another Commissioner for Oaths before whom he swore that he was a member of a Foreign Diplomatic Corps, and 'craved the court' to set aside the judgment obtained against him and stay the proceedings at Brentford County Court. He took pains to file this affidavit at the High Court, and succeeded in getting the judge to issue a summons staying the bankruptcy proceedings for fourteen days. This is certainly what might be called 'slick' practice, done deliberately and with intent, revealing that keen knowledge of the processes of the law which one would expect of a barrister.

The firm of solicitors who had served the Bankruptcy Notice also knew the law, however, and were not content to let their defaulting client get away with it. They made a few enquiries on their own, and then handed on the information they obtained to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who consulted Scotland Yard and asked

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them to carry out a thorough investigation into the activities of Martin Sebastian Saldanha.

The result of these enquiries may be summarised thus: Saldanha *was* a British subject, and not even remotely connected with the Spanish Embassy. He was *not* entitled to any diplomatic privileges, and the affidavit purporting to have been sworn by Eduardo de Pena had, in fact, been sworn by Saldanha himself, posing as the Secretary to the Embassy.

Saldanha was arrested, committed for trial, and in due course entered the dock at the Old Bailey for the second time, on this occasion to face a charge of forging and uttering an affidavit and of committing perjury. Mr Travers Humphreys (now Sir Travers) conducted the case for the prosecution. He did not spare the ex-barrister in outlining the nature of the prisoner's offences, which he described as 'impudent.'

Saldanha, declared counsel, had described himself as an 'additional attaché' to the Spanish Embassy, and claimed that he had been appointed to this office under the 'protection' of King Alfonso of Spain. It is true that when that monarch was staying at the Ritz Hotel, Saldanha gained audience with him, but at the time of this interview, in November, 1920, there had been no talk of any such appointment. In fact, Saldanha had not long been released from the six months sentence passed upon him in March of that year.

From the dock, Saldanha cross-examined the witnesses called to give evidence against him. It availed him nothing, and he was sent to prison for fifteen months. That he dared to appeal against his sentence illustrates the effrontery which marked all his appearances in court. Before the Lord Chief Justice (then Lord Hewart) it was argued on Saldanha's behalf that only one witness had

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been called at the trial to refute his statement that he was an 'additional attaché,' whereas under the Statute two witnesses were necessary. Lord Hewart was quick to deal with this argument, pointing out that it was Saldanha himself who had made the claim, and that as it was *he* who had sworn and forged the bogus affidavit, that was corroboration enough. The appeal was dismissed, and Saldanha returned once more to his prison cell.

So far he had suffered no convictions for fraud or false pretences, but on his release from that 1921 term of imprisonment he apparently decided to widen his experience in crime, displaying in his new field a subtlety of mind worthy of better ends. He selected as his intended victim the late Viscount Fitzalan, who died in 1947 at the great old age of ninety-one. Lord Fitzalan was well known as a philanthropist and as one of the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church in this country.

The Viscount began to receive letters from one who signed himself 'C. Satajain,' asking for financial assistance on behalf of Saldanha. The assistance asked was in the region of £5,000, and of course Saldanha himself was the writer of these colourful epistles. At various times and in various letters he described himself as the heir-presumptive to a dukedom, a Marquis in his own right, the organiser of the Portuguese Royalists in this country, and a leader of the Austrian monarchists.

Saldanha had got into financial difficulties owing to his activities in these matters, wrote 'Mr Satajain,' while acting as the financial mainstay of the exiled King of Portugal. The writer, it was explained, was a Dutch Quaker who had become interested in Saldanha because of his sterling qualities. Quaker friends of the purely imaginary Satajain had offered Saldanha the position of

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vice-president of a theological college in Yorkshire, but, said the writer, Saldanha had refused the appointment because he considered it an attack on his Roman Catholic faith.

Few stories could have been better designed to stimulate the philanthropic instincts of a leader of Roman Catholicism. Viscount Fitzalan parted with certain sums of money, but later communicated with the police, with the result that once more Saldanha found himself up at the Old Bailey on an indictment containing eight counts. The first three charged him with uttering forged documents; the second with attempting to obtain money by a forged instrument; and the remaining two counts with attempted false pretences. One of the counts dealt with his attempt to obtain the tenancy of a house in Cheyne Row, Chelsea, in the name of Satajain by means of a forged reference. Altogether it was a formidable list of offences.

With impudent bravado Saldanha went into the witness-box, where, of course, he was submitted to cross-examination. He had to admit that nobody except himself had ever seen his Quaker friend Satajain—surely an unusual name for a Dutch Quaker! He also agreed that on one occasion when a solicitor's clerk came to the house with a letter referring to the letting of the house in Chelsea (addressed to Satajain) he (Saldanha) was addressed as Mr Satajain by the clerk, and responded to that name; also that he was at the time reading another letter addressed to Satajain.

The prisoner explained to the court that he met the mysterious Mr Satajain in 1923, and the latter had become greatly interested in him. When asked why he had not called that gentleman to corroborate his story, Saldanha replied that he could not find him. The jury

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were not impressed with his story, and Saldanha departed once more to become a guest of His Majesty for fifteen months.

No sooner was he out of prison after that conviction than he came to our notice again. In 1926 he received police cautions on account of writing threatening letters to people. One of these was Viscount Fitzalan, his earlier benefactor, and other recipients of similar letters were Earl Winterton, the Marquis of Bendana, Lord Chamberlain to Her Majesty the Queen of Spain, and—the Governor of Winchester prison, who had played host to Saldanha during one of his periods of 'time.'

In 1929 he was again before the courts in connection with alleged false pretences. It was stated at Saldanha's trial that he had obtained money and credit from two people by pretending that he had a lawsuit in the House of Lords against the liquidators of the Gerard Lee Bevan companies, for a trifling matter of £65,000, and needed money to finance the hearing of the case. The amounts he was alleged to have obtained were only trivial, and by no means matched his story. He was in difficulties because he had just given £250 to a cathedral, he stated, according to the evidence given at his trial. He had a ranch in Brazil, was a Portuguese count and was expecting £10,000 from the King of Spain who was his cousin.

'Are you a relative of the King of Spain?' enquired Judge Atherly Jones blandly.

'No, sir,' was the reply. 'I am a relation of John o', Gaunt.'

Whether or not his claim to kinship with this son of Edward III made any impression on the jury, they certainly returned a verdict of 'Not Guilty,' and Saldanha walked from the dock a free and smiling man.

In May, 1930, he appeared in the less sinister atmo-

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sphere of the Law Courts; this time as witness in a legal action in which an old-age pensioner of 76 was a party. During Saldanha's evidence he declared that his name was Don de Saldanha, and that he succeeded to the title on the death of his brother. In answer to questions he denied that he had ever been in trouble in this country, and had never been disbarred by his fellow-benchers of the Inner Temple. He also denied that he had ever been known under the name of Martin Sebastian Saldanha. They were silly, futile, obvious lies, which could so easily be disproved, and at the end of the High Court action the judge ordered the papers to be sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions. The latter ordered a warrant for perjury to be issued against Saldanha and I was instructed to carry out his arrest.

After many enquiries I found him at a modest dwelling in Compton Road, Islington, where he occupied one room. He was evidently a most cultured man, very loquacious, and very much upon his dignity. He made it quite clear to me that a man like him, of Spanish Royal descent, felt affronted at being questioned by a mere minion of the police. So voluble was he that I had some difficulty in stemming the tide in order to put the questions I was bound to put to him. He simply scoffed at the suggestion that he was Martin Sebastian Saldanha, and when I asked him outright, 'Have you ever used that name?' he replied hotly: 'No, I have not.'

After this I had no alternative but to arrest him. There were other enquiries still to make, however, and I saw the old gentleman for whom Saldanha claimed to have been acting under a power of attorney in the case at the Law Courts. He told me that he had paid out some £40 to the accused for writs and other legal documents, and was now penniless.

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Experience had evidently taught Saldanha little, or perhaps he thought that if he went into the witness-box he might repeat his 1929 performance and stalk from the dock a free man. Anyway, he decided to harangue the court, and stated that when he was called as a witness in the High Court he knew nothing about the facts of the case beyond what was contained in the documents in possession of the judge. He said he had given evidence on the first day of the hearing, and had then been recalled to the witness-box the next day. 'I took it for granted,' he declared, 'that I was not on oath then.'

This was a surprising assumption for a man of his wide legal knowledge to jump to, and whether on oath or not, he would hardly have been justified in telling such deliberate lies. But Saldanha, of course, had another name for them. 'Placed in the position in which I found myself,' he told the jury, 'I felt that I was entitled to use what students of philosophy call "mental reservations."'

There were no mental reservations about Mr Percival Clarke when he rose to cross-examine the witness. He asked one or two very probing questions which drew from the prisoner the remark: 'Your father would not have asked me that question.' (The father referred to was that Grand Old Man of the Bar, Sir Edward Clarke, K.C., one of the greatest advocates who ever graced our courts.)

'Never mind about the dead,' replied the great man's son. 'Please confine your attention to the living.'

The jury did not take long to arrive at their verdict of 'Guilty,' after which it was my turn to enter the witness-box. It was then that I uttered the words with which I opened this account of Saldanha's career; after which Mr Justice MacNaghten sent him to prison for three years.



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Not long after this I was transferred to 'X' Division, at Harlesden, as Divisional Detective Inspector, but two years later, in the August of 1932, I became First-Class Detective Inspector, and was transferred again to the Yard on receiving my promotion. Two months later I was transferred to Paddington, the 'F' Division, as Divisional Detective Inspector. At that time 'F' Division embraced the wide area of Paddington, Notting Hill, Notting Dale and Kensington. After some eight months the Divisions were reorganised and the headquarters were moved to Hammersmith. The Paddington area was taken away from 'F' Division, and the Hammersmith, Shepherds Bush and Chiswick districts were added.

I remained at Hammersmith till January, 1934, when I was appointed one of the first Crime Chiefs. This was a uniform job with the euphonious rank of Chief Inspector, Crime. In the July of that year I was reappointed Chief Inspector at the Yard and sent off on one of the most intriguing poisoning cases of this century.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### A VILLAGE POISONING

**I**T WAS AN anonymous letter which shed the first light on this sensational drama, and sent to the gallows the first woman to be hanged for many years. But for that letter I doubt whether any suspicion of foul play would have been aroused concerning the death of Arthur Major, a forty-four-year-old lorry driver, of Kirkby-on-Bain, Lincolnshire.

A death certificate had already been issued giving the cause of death as *status epilepticus*; the funeral arrangements had already been completed and the grave dug to receive the body when, on the afternoon of May 26th, Inspector Dodson of the Horncastle police received the following note:

'Sir,—Have you ever heard of a wife poisoning her husband? Look further into the death (by heart failure) of Mr Major, of Kirkby-on-Bain.

Why did he complain of his food tasting nasty and throw it to a neighbour's dog, which has since died?

Ask the undertaker if he looked natural after death.

Why did he stiffen so quickly? Why was he so jerky when dying? I myself have heard her threaten to poison him years ago.

In the name of the law I beg you to analyse the contents of his stomach.'

The letter was signed 'Fairplay.' It bore no address, nor was the identity of the writer ever discovered.

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Naturally, it called for immediate investigation, and Inspector Dodson at once set out to make enquiries of the doctor who had attended the dead man. He learned from the doctor that Arthur Major had been taken suddenly ill with violent spasms and painful muscular contractions on the night of May 22nd, and had died two nights later from an epileptic fit as he thought at the time.

Let me say at once that, from Major's symptoms and from information given him by Mrs Major, the doctor was misled in making this diagnosis, as she had told him her husband had suffered from fits for years. As the doctor had not attended the family before, he had no reason to suspect foul play.

From the doctor's surgery, Inspector Dodson went to 2 Council Houses, Kirkby-on-Bain, the home of the Majors, where he saw the wife and viewed the body. As he was leaving the cottage Mrs Major came to the door and made a somewhat peculiar remark. (It was peculiar because she knew nothing about the anonymous letter, or that the Inspector had been to see the doctor.)

'I am not suspicioned?' she asked, adding, 'I haven't done anything wrong.'

There remained the question of the dog referred to in the letter as having died from poisoning. Now, the Majors had no dog, but on the night of May 23rd the wire-haired terrier of Mr Maltby, a next-door neighbour, had been seized with a 'sudden stiffness,' as its owner described it, and had died during the night, following severe muscular contractions. Mr Maltby buried the animal in his garden.

This 'stiffness' and 'muscular contractions' were the very symptoms from which Arthur Major had died. There was only one way to check up on this grim

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coincidence. In the gathering twilight of that same night, May 26th, the body of the dog was exhumed from its shallow grave.

The following morning the Coroner, Dr Walker, of Spilsby, was acquainted with the facts and at once issued a dramatic order that the funeral of Arthur Major be stopped and a post mortem examination on both the dead man and the dog be carried out. This was done and the organs of man and beast were sent for examination to Dr Roche Lynche, St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, the famous Home Office analyst.

One can easily imagine the sensation in the peaceful little hamlet of Kirkby-on-Bain, with its population of just over 200, when it became known that the funeral of the dead man had been stopped by order of the Coroner. The Major family were well known in the district, having lived in and around the area for many years. Speculation was rife and rumour ran riot during the time that the findings of Dr Roche Lynch were awaited.

Weeks went by and then, in response to a request from the Chief Constable of Lincoln, I was sent down with another officer from the Yard to take charge of the enquiries. I arrived at Horncastle Police Station on July 2nd—about six weeks after the death of Arthur Major. The report of the analyst had been received and was startling in content. Dr Roche Lynch stated that he had found fatal amounts of strychnine in the organs of both Arthur Major and the dog. He was of opinion that the man had died from strychnine poisoning administered in two doses, the last dose being given shortly before death ensued. Dr Lynch emphasised how unlikely it was that the poison was self-administered, because no one except a madman would take a second dose after suffering all the agony of a first administration.

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This discounted the idea of suicide and pointed clearly to murder. But murder by whom? That was the question which faced me on my arrival at Horncastle on the summer day in July, 1934. The sun was shining brightly in contrast to the lowering clouds of tragedy that hovered over the peaceful countryside. I wasted no time in getting to know something about the chief actors in this drama of life and death. I learned that the married life of Arthur Major and his wife had been far from idyllic, being marked by quarrels and misunderstandings beyond the ordinary tiffs of married couples.

At the time of the husband's death things had almost reached breaking-point. During that week Arthur Major had arranged to insert in the local Press a notice repudiating responsibility for his wife's debts, which were many but not very large, being mainly bills run up with local tradesmen and left unpaid.

What of the wife? Mrs Major was described to me as a 'quarrelsome, cantankerous woman,' boastful and very unpopular in the neighbourhood. She was very vain and had an inordinate fondness for clothes. I was amazed later on, when searching her home, to find her wardrobe full of lovely new dresses and about twenty-odd pairs of good-quality shoes.

I discovered from time to time she had made unfounded charges against her husband, accusing him of being a drunkard, an idler, and alleging that he was guilty of seducing other women. She also complained, on May 23—three days before he was taken ill—that her husband had put something in her tea. Not only, in fact, did she suggest that her husband had been trying to poison her, but as though to supply a motive for his trying to get her out of the way, she had



Hennetta Hollumby found Newman irresistible despite the fact that he boasted among his villainies blackmail, bigamy, robbery, safe-breaking, swindling, and false pretences.



## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE II

These two photographs of the author span forty years. He is pictured on his last day in uniform before entering the C.I.D. (A.M.) and saying farewell to the Yard (January 1954).

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spread it abroad that Mrs Rose Kettleboro, a woman  
near her home, had written letters to her husband couched  
in the most affectionate terms. She even produced two  
love-letters which, she alleged, she had found on  
the floor of her husband's bedroom.

The Major evidently had a weakness for anonymous  
letters, and while enquiries into the death of her husband  
were being pursued, she produced several of these  
in the name of her husband, all of them containing charges against her hus-  
band of a most shocking character. In one letter, which she said she had  
received back as May 12th, she wrote the following  
in the name of her husband: 'Don't worry me, I am well and spends  
his money as he likes. I shall be home soon. You  
could get a picture of me if you like. . .'

About a fortnight after the receipt of the picture  
postcard on May 12th, the Major was found in the same place,  
same time.

(It is hard to imagine any woman engaged in a guilty  
intrigue with a married man sending a postcard of such  
an intimate nature through the post to the home of

the Major. . . .  
nearer to the tragedy, on May 12th,  
an anonymous communication was received  
from the Major, in the name of the writer  
able of Lincoln, in the name of the writer  
(The Major is *always* in charge  
on the road.' The writer concluded  
'It is my duty to inform you of the  
safety of the *people* in the village.' The  
two words in *italic* specially to be

refer to one other note. As I have men-  
tioned, the Major intended that the notice repudiating  
his debts should appear in the issue of the *Horn-*  
*castle News* for May 26th. He died on May 24th, and the



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following morning Mrs Major sent a letter to the paper cancelling the notice. I could not help feeling this action was significant. I knew she had been aware of her husband's intentions, and wondered whether this knowledge had influenced her in speeding his death, in order to avoid the blow to her pride which the publication of such a notice would inflict.

Several little unconnected details, it will be observed, gradually became woven into a net of suspicion as my enquiries continued. I had before me the signed statements Mrs Major had already made to the local police, in which her story varied in vital details. The circumstances were strongly suspicious, but suspicion is not enough to act on in a case of suspected murder. It was essential for me to see Mrs Major myself, so that I could hear from her own mouth the story of those eight hours which preceded the agonising death of her husband. I first saw and interviewed the son, Laurence Major, at Horncastle, and then I visited the cottage where I saw his mother.

In view of my suspicions I issued the usual formal caution before beginning my interview, making sure that she quite understood her position. One can learn much from a person's demeanour during an interview, just as one can learn much concerning the character of a witness at a trial by studying his or her demeanour in the witness-box. I watched Mrs Major very closely during my visit to 2 Council Houses on July 3rd, a day after my arrival on the scene.

She impressed me as a cool and resourceful woman suffering no pangs of sorrow at the loss of her husband. In fact, she seemed quite callous about the whole affair, and even informed me that she felt 'much better in health since he was gone.' She began, however, by telling me that she was sure her husband had died through

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eating corned beef. She appeared over-eager to impress me with the fact that she had nothing to do with providing his meals, explaining that for a fortnight before her husband's death she and her young son had not slept at home, but had stayed with her father. 'They dared not sleep at home,' she told me, 'because she and her husband were not on good terms.'

'My husband bought his tinned beef himself,' she went on, adding with great insistence: 'I know that I never bought any. I hate corned beef and think it is a waste of money to buy such rubbish.'

This obvious desire to dissociate herself with any provision or purchase of corned beef seemed to me rather important, because corned beef was the last meal eaten by Arthur Major before he was seized with his fatal illness on the night of May 22nd.

Equally important was her statement that she and her son had been staying at the home of Mr Brown, her father, for the two weeks preceding her husband's death. The importance of this was that Mr Brown had been a great gamekeeper, in the habit of using poison for vermin. I asked her whether she knew this.

'I did not know where he kept the poison,' she told me, and then committed the one fatal slip in all the statements she had made since the enquiries started. 'I never at any time had poison in the house,' she declared, *'and did not know that my husband died of strychnine poisoning.'*

The italics are mine. Except for Dr Roche Lynche, myself and other high-ranking officers engaged on the enquiry, nobody else knew that Arthur Major had died from strychnine poisoning: yet Mrs Major did!

'I never mentioned strychnine,' I challenged her. 'How did you know your husband had died from poisoning by strychnine?'

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She quickly recovered herself.

'Oh—I'm sorry,' she replied, 'I must have made a mistake. I didn't understand what you said. I am still of the opinion that he died from poison from the corned beef.'

So, once more, she had reverted to the subject of corned beef, and once more she sought to impress upon me that she had nothing to do with providing her husband's meal, by adding, '*I have never bought corned beef, nor has my son.*' Again the italics are mine, and I got a further glimpse into the psychology of Mrs Major when she mentioned that on the day her husband was taken ill she saw the corned beef which he ate later for tea, standing on the pantry shelf.

'It was quite black,' she told me. 'I thought at the time it was bad, but did not tell my husband so.' This seemed a remarkable admission, almost as if she had said outright: 'I didn't care if he got food-poisoning.' The utter indifference to her husband's safety and health seemed not so very far removed from the state of mind where she would be prepared to administer poison herself. These reflections were interrupted by her rising and saying to me: 'You look tired. Let me make you a cup of tea.'

I am not unduly impressionable, but the idea of having a cup of tea made by Mrs Major did not appeal to me just then.

'No thank you,' I replied, remarking that it was a very kind thought on her part. Without the least trace of embarrassment she beamed across at me. 'You needn't be afraid of me,' she said, 'I won't put anything in it.'

I had to make some sort of excuse, so I quickly replied: 'As a matter of fact, Mrs Major, I never drink tea.'

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She did not press me any further, and I continued taking her statement. When her husband was suddenly taken ill with violent pain on the night of his corned beef meal, her reactions were somewhat unusual. She did not send for a doctor at all, and it was not till her father called at the cottage about 11 p.m. that *he* sent the son running for the doctor—who, when he arrived, treated the patient to ease his agony.

The treatment was evidently effective, for on the following day, Mrs Major told me, her husband had recovered slightly. That night, however, he suffered a relapse, and (said his wife) he 'seemed very ill and in convulsions.' Did Mrs Major send for the doctor? No!

By the morning of May 24th, Arthur Major was much weaker, and at times could hardly speak. Mrs Major betrayed not the least emotion as she related the story of her husband's last hours. About 7 p.m. that evening, she said, her husband managed to gasp out that he wanted a drink. Both the son and the woman's father were present at this death-bed scene, and I was able to check up on the accuracy of her story. She fetched a glass of water, and, raising the dying man in their arms, she and her father supported him while he drank it. Some three hours later the husband, beginning to writhe in agony once more, murmured: 'I'm going to have another fit . . . I'm going to die. Don't leave me yet . . . You have been good to me.'

An hour later, his whole body stiff and contorted so as to make the laying-out process difficult, Arthur Major died.

From those who saw her immediately after the death of her husband, I learned that Mrs Major exhibited no grief whatever. Instead she displayed rather feverish activity in making preparations for a hasty burial of the

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dead man. She visited the doctor for a death certificate, and when the latter asked why she had not called him to her husband, made some specious excuse. She tried to get her husband buried within three days, at which even the undertaker protested that it did not give him 'much time,' but said he would do his best. The funeral was, in fact, fixed for May 27th, and some of the mourners were already assembled at the cottage where the body lay when the Coroner stopped the funeral.

In all such enquiries as this, one has to carry out sad and unpleasant duties, and one of the saddest in my recollection was the interview I had with young Lawrence Major, the dead man's son. As can be imagined, his had not been a particularly happy childhood, and his father had not been very kind to him. Now, having interviewed Mrs Major, I had to have a further interview with the boy. I purposely saw him in the presence of his mother, and I can recall even now her agitation and anger when the lad related how, a day or two before his father was taken ill, his mother had sent him out after ~~all~~ the shops had closed, to buy a tin of corned beef for his father's meal.

The woman stoutly denied doing so, but the boy reminded her: 'Don't you remember giving me the money to go and get it?' 'No, I didn't,' she replied with heat. 'Your father sent you.' But the boy was insistent and pointed out that his father was out at the time. At this point I remarked that the woman at the shop remembered the occasion quite clearly, at which Mrs Major flew into a violent rage and started shouting: 'Every woman in this village is a liar. If any woman says I sent my son, she is a liar.' I managed to quieten her down, but the significance of this scene was all too obvious.

From the very beginning, Mrs Major had suggested

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that her husband had died from food poisoning through eating corned beef. She had said so to the doctor, she had repeated it to Inspector Dodson, and also to me. Above all, there was her desperate anxiety to conceal her connection with any purchase of corned beef. Yet it had now been proved by her son that only three days before her husband became ill, she had sent the boy to purchase a tin of this very foodstuff. It was one of those slips which so often prove the downfall of the most cunning criminal, and Mrs Major was not that. Had she chosen any other time than when the shops were closed for the night, the shopkeeper might well have forgotten all about the incident; but the fact that the boy had to go round to the back door to be served, fixed it clearly in her mind.

Out of her own mouth, too, Mrs Major had revealed her knowledge that her father kept poison in a certain box in his bedroom; that she had been sleeping at his home during the fortnight prior to her husband's illness; that she might have had access to the poison box even though it was locked; and that she also had had access to the corned beef which she admitted seeing on the pantry shelf on the day that her husband was taken ill. She also knew that her husband had died from strychnine poisoning.

*Could* she have got to that box with its phial of strychnine crystals? There was only one way to find out, and that was to go and see her seventy-year-old father. Sad-eyed but erect despite his years, he proved to be a fine type of countryman, truthful to the last degree, yet obviously worried over the enquiries concerning his daughter.

I explained my unhappy errand, and he gave a half-hearted smile. 'I'll help you if I can,' he said, and then I asked him point-blank: 'Did your daughter know the

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whereabouts of the box in which you kept the strychnine?’

‘Yes, mister,’ he replied.

I asked him to show me the box and he did so. I examined it closely. ‘Would your daughter be able to open this box?’ I asked, but the old man shook his head.

‘No, mister,’ he said, and then pulled up his waistcoat revealing a cloth belt in which was a pocket fastened with a button. ‘I always carry the key of that box about with me in this pocket,’ he went on. ‘It has never left me, day or night.’

I was frankly puzzled after this interview, for despite exhaustive enquiries at chemists and all places where the poison might have been bought, I had not obtained any evidence to establish such a purchase; I felt sure that Mrs Major must have found a way of opening that box by some means unknown to me.

I left the old man to his sorrow and pondered all the details of the case. It is not, of course, incumbent upon the police to prove motive, no matter what the crime may be. But if one can produce any evidence which helps to show motive, then it is advisable to check up on it. I recalled the letters which Mrs Major declared she had found on the floor of her husband’s bedroom. I read them once more and studied them closely.

There was no mistaking the tender love passages contained in them, and they appeared to be the outpourings of a woman deeply in love with the man she was writing to. The first began: ‘To my dearest sweetheart,’ and was signed ‘Rose.’ The second was in even more passionate strain, beginning: ‘To the dearest sweetheart in the world.’ It closed with ‘fondest love to my precious one from your loving sweetheart, Rose.’ Both letters contained rows of crosses representing kisses, but in the second letter there occurred the following passage: ‘Let-

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ters are nice dear and do so much to sooth our aching hearts, but some day I shall be able to have your arms round me for *allways*.'

The suggestion that her neighbour, Mrs Rose Kettleboro, was the writer of those letters had come from Mrs Major, as had the accusation that 'Rose' had been engaged in a liaison with the dead man. I decided to interview Mrs Kettleboro, because if, in fact, she had *not* written the letters, it seemed to me that Mrs Major must herself have written them. And, if she *bad* done so, there could only be one reason—to direct suspicion against Mrs Kettleboro in the event of any doubts arising concerning the death of Arthur Major.

This inference seemed to have some confirmation later on when I saw Mrs Major to take a second statement from her, and she volunteered a further accusation against her neighbour. 'If my husband has had poison, it is Mrs Kettleboro who has done it,' she declared to me. 'I leave the latch of my door up when I go out and she could get in the back way.'

I have already remarked on the number of anonymous letters produced by Mrs Major during the course of police enquiries, and on comparing the handwriting on these various documents I was struck by the similarity of certain characteristics in the formation of certain letters. They revealed an attempt to disguise the writing, but the similarities were still evident. I compared the anonymous communications, and the two letters signed 'Rose,' with samples of handwriting obtained directly from Mrs Major. From that comparison I came to the conclusion that they were written by the same hand.

It was not only in the matter of handwriting but in the manner of spelling as well. When Mrs Major was asked to write the word 'people,' she spelled it 'peopel,' and



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the word 'always' in the letter from 'Rose' was misspelled 'allways'—the mistakes in both cases being the same as in the anonymous letters. There was surely something more than coincidence in all this.

On July 9th, just one week after arriving on the scene of tragedy, I made my way once more to the cottage at Kirkby-on-Bain. The red-gold hue of a lovely sunset filled the sky as Mrs Major opened the door. We stepped into the small front room and I administered the usual caution before telling her that I was about to detain her for the murder of her husband.

'I didn't do it,' she said. 'I am as innocent as the day is long,' and then—a repetition of the charge against an innocent woman. 'If I have given my husband poison, it is Mrs Kettleboro or someone who came to my house and put it there.' She pointed to the pantry on the shelf of which she had seen the corned beef. 'It is wicked for people to accuse me, I loved my husband, and I am his lawful wedded wife.'

It sounded very unconvincing, this protestation of love for a man whom she had described to me as 'detestable' and of whom she had said that she felt better 'since he was gone.' I also remembered how she had gone to his employers and charged him with drunkenness, and how on many occasions over the years she had displayed the most vindictive malice towards him; finally, I recalled her lack of emotion throughout all my interviews with her when talking about her dead husband.

Taken to the police station at Horncastle, she pleaded 'Not Guilty' to the formal charge, and was remanded.

There were still a few ends to be tied up before all my work on the case was done. The place had to be thoroughly searched, and I spent a considerable time on this task, the cottage being under continual police guard.

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I made my way to the bedroom which had been occupied by Mrs Major. In a brown suitcase containing a white sheet and articles of clothing I discovered a small purse. Opening this purse, I found inside it a key and a penny, around which was wrapped a piece of paper bearing the words, 'Mother's Penny.' There were also a number of documents bearing recent dates which proved that the purse was one she had been using in current times.

I was not interested in the coin, nor for that matter in the contents of the documents beyond the dates upon them. My eyes were taking in every detail of the key, because it looked remarkably similar to the one Mr Brown had produced from the pocket in his cloth belt when I went to examine the trunk in which he kept his pest poison. The key I now held in my hand was worn down at one side of the barrel and thus presented a distinctive appearance.

I drove off in a car to the cottage of the accused woman's father, and I shall never forget the expression of sadness on his face as I came inside. 'Did you ever have another key for the trunk?' I asked him.

'What have you found now?' he answered, and then after a momentary pause he continued: 'I am an old man, Mister, I will tell you nothing but the truth. I *did* have another key, but I lost it years ago. It was the one I got with the trunk, and it *was worn down at the side of the barrel*. I never knew the going of it!'

So here was the answer to the problem which had been puzzling me: How could Mrs Major have got at the poison locked in that trunk without her father's knowledge?

Once more I felt very sorry for the old man who stood there before me as I reached into my pocket and produced a bunch of my own keys, to which I had added the

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one found in his daughter's purse. I held them out to him, and his fingers trembled as he took them one by one. But there was not a split second of hesitation as he stopped at the one I had added to the bunch.

'That's her, Mister,' he said in a quavering voice.

Nothing could be left to chance in a case of this kind. 'Do you mind if I try it in the lock?' I asked, and he took me into the bedroom where the trunk was. I turned the key several times in the lock to make sure that it worked. It did. Here, indeed, was the keystone to complete the arch of my case; the final link in the chain of evidence that was to prove the guilt of Ethel Major.

On a cold November morning in 1934, the closing scene in this village poisoning was enacted at Lincoln Assizes when Mrs Major stood her trial. The jury retired to consider their verdict. An hour and ten minutes later they found her guilty, adding a strong recommendation to mercy. The black cap was adjusted, and in low, even tones, Mr Justice Charles pronounced sentence of death.

The woman in the dock sobbed quietly as the sentence was being pronounced, and as the final words were uttered, her frail form drooped pitifully against the shoulder of one of the women police officers who had been at her side throughout the trial. At the conclusion she collapsed completely and had to be carried from the dock, her cries echoing through the silent court, but growing softer and softer in the distance until no sound was heard.

The recommendation to mercy was passed on to the proper quarter, but poisoners who have shown no mercy to their victims, who have callously stood by and watched them suffer, seldom receive mercy at the hands of justice, and for my part I think it is as well.

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On my return to London, I took up duty at the Yard, and after the interesting weeks spent in solving the Kirkby-on-Bain poisoning mystery, I admit to having found things rather tame. I knew, however, that sooner or later another unusual enquiry would come my way, and sure enough it did, in one of the strangest cases I ever remember.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SUICIDE OF  
'GENTLEMAN TOM'

**N**OT ALL THE cases on which I was engaged reached their denouement at the Old Bailey. Some of the most sensational came to a dramatic climax in the more leisurely atmosphere of a coroner's court, where cases of suicide and other examples of untimely death are investigated. Such enquiries, moreover, may be just as involved and troublesome as the most complicated murder investigations, as will become apparent in the course of this story.

Men and women take their lives in a variety of ways: it may be a speedy death from a bullet through the brain, or the slower method of the gas tap; it may be the slash of a razor across a throat, or a 'fall' from a roof-top; death from a phial of poison or from a deliberate overdose of sleeping tablets. But whatever the method employed, there is, of course, always some special motive for suicide, except in the case of a *really* insane person—on whom is returned a verdict of 'Suicide while of unsound mind'; or, in its more recent and less sinister rendering, 'The deceased took his life while the balance of his mind was disturbed.'

These words cover a multitude of complex mental conditions which the lay mind would find it difficult to analyse, and which we need not go into here. As to motive, this too may vary greatly from the heartbreak

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suffered by a jilted lover to the grief of a person bereaved of some dear one; from domestic unhappiness to business worries, poverty, or a score of other circumstances so depressing as to make someone decide he 'cannot go on any longer.'

I have been called to many such cases in the course of duty and have looked upon death in many guises, from the untidy, gaping wound of a hastily slit throat to the more peaceful-looking end from gas poisoning, but do not think I have ever beheld a more macabre spectacle than that which met my eyes on September 5th, 1934.

It had come to my knowledge that the City police were interested in the movements of a man called Newbold who, for the past six weeks, had been staying at an exclusive hotel off Piccadilly, London. As a complaint reached me at the Yard, I instructed a couple of C.I.D. men to keep him under observation. I wanted to know all about the man: what he was up to, who were his associates over here, how he was living, and anything else which might be of assistance to the Yard. I learned that he had arrived at the hotel from Ostend, engaging a suite consisting of a bedroom, sitting-room and bath-room, at £3 a day. He signed the register 'T. Gray Newbold,' and mentioned as personal friends the names of several people who had stayed at the hotel. Establishing himself thus as a man of good social standing, he was accepted as such without hesitation by the hotel authorities.

One morning I was sitting in my office when the telephone bell rang. One of the two men keeping observation on the above gentleman was at the other end of the line, and he told me at once: 'I am afraid that the man Newbold is dead.'

'That's all right,' I replied, 'that ends the observation.'

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'But there is more to it than that, sir,' he went on. 'He's committed suicide in *three different ways*.'

'All right,' I said, 'I'll come straightaway.'

In a few minutes I had reached the hotel, where I learned that the mysterious Thomas Gray Newbold had been found dead in a bath. There was an atmosphere of subdued excitement about the place, such as one always senses on such occasions. For however it comes, tragedy must cast its shadow, and the manager of a hotel always tries to shield his other guests from all knowledge of any unpleasant happenings in his hotel.

I was taken immediately to the bathroom, where I saw the body of a man half-sitting in the bath, his arms crossed and head erect. There was no water in the bath at this time, as the police officer called to the scene had removed the plug and allowed the water to run away. I was told that there were about fifteen inches of water when he first saw the dead man.

It was the condition of the body which attracted my attention. Those parts which had evidently been under water were an angry red in colour. The corpse looked as though it had been boiled, the skin having an appearance of maceration to the point of soreness. I bent down over the bath and noticed two small slits in the skin of the man's arms. They were not accidental marks, but had clearly been made with some sharp instrument. I looked around the room and saw a razor-blade on the window-sill. The floor of the bathroom was stained with blood in patches. On a shelf was found a bottle which had contained some powder, together with a tumbler in which traces of some white residue could be detected, and a small box such as chemists use for sleeping or other tablets.

The circumstances of Newbold's death were certainly

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unusual. From a quick survey of what I saw it appeared that he had drunk something from the bottle and most probably taken the contents of the box as well; he had then nicked his arms with the razor-blade, and finally climbed into a scalding bath of water, determined that if he did not succumb to the effects of the drugs or bleed to death from razor cuts he would die from drowning. No one could have helped wondering what had driven this man to take his life in so determined and threefold a manner.

I tackled the hotel staff, to see what they knew about the dead man; they knew very little. He was a charming and kindly, rather venerable-looking old gentleman, upon whom nobody called. Harry Denyer, who acted as valet, was the man who found Newbold dead. That morning he entered the latter's bedroom to call him as usual. The bed was empty, and he crossed to the bathroom. He could hear the bathroom tap running, so he tapped on the door. There was no reply, so he entered. There lay Newbold in a bath of water from which the steam was still rising; the police were called at once. From M. Biere, the hotel manager, I learned that only a day or so before the tragedy he had approached the dead man for settlement of his hotel bill, which had not been paid since his arrival. Newbold told him that he had lost £2,000 in a business deal, but would pay his bill the following week.

The City Police and the Metropolitan Police always keep each other informed of any developments in cases affecting both Forces, and, having heard that Detective Inspector Burrell of the City Police had been making enquiries concerning Newbold, I informed him of his death. I then learned something more about the dead man. On August 31st, the Inspector had called at the



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Federated Trust and Finance Corporation in Copthall Avenue, in connection with the fraudulent uttering of some forged letters of allotment and also with certain shares; he was told that these documents had been handed to the company by a man giving the name of Newbold.

Inspector Burrell saw Newbold, who told him that he had bought the letters from a man named Warner, an American whom he met in Ostend and who had since returned to the States. The Inspector got in touch with a firm of New York solicitors who after making enquiries reported their failure to trace any such man at the address given by Newbold. He (the Inspector) was in the process of contacting Newbold again for the purpose of getting further information concerning this Mr Warren, when—Newbold committed suicide.

It seemed from this that the dead man, far from being a man of substance with influential friends, was nothing more than a swindler concerned with forged letters of allotment. This, of course, was much more interesting from the point of view of identity, for might he not be in our records?

A search under the name of Newbold proved negative, however, and some other means of discovering his real identity had to be adopted. It occurred to me that Newbold might be an assumed name to act as a cloak for carrying out any fraud he might have in mind.

This conjecture gained in plausibility when the copy of a birth certificate was found in the trunk at the bottom of the bedstead. This certificate bore the name of 'George Thomas Newman, son of Robert Newman,' and gave date and place of birth as 'January 23rd, 1865, at Florence Street, Deptford, London.' Again the records at the Yard were searched, and again there was no trace

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of any previous conviction in connection with anyone bearing the name on the birth certificate.

Who and where was George Thomas Newman? I made my way to Somerset House, where all the records of births, deaths and marriages are filed, in order to discover who had signed the application form for the birth certificate; the writing on it could then be compared with the known writing of the dead man. I found that the application was made on August 30th, about a week before Newbold's death, and that it was signed by a 'J. E. Brown,' living in Charing Cross Road. The writing was *not* that of Newbold.

What then was Newbold doing with this birth certificate, and who was 'J. E. Brown'? Enquiries revealed that among Newbold's acquaintances was a Colonel J. H. Brown, with offices in Piccadilly; but when I sent a police officer to interview the Colonel he was not to be found. The writing on the application form was that of the absent Colonel, but apart from that we had not learned much about the connection between Newbold and Newman.

We seemed at first to have been greatly helped by the publicity given in the Press to the story of Newbold's strange death and the mystery of the birth certificate; for as a result of it a Miss Geraldine Newbold came forward to see if she could identify the dead man as her brother, Cyril Gray Newbold. She was shown a passport which had been found on the dead man's dressing-table; it contained the usual photograph, description and particulars. Miss Newbold promptly identified the photograph as that of her brother. But the signature on the passport, she said, was not in her brother's handwriting.

When she was taken to view the body, she was equally insistent that it was *not* that of her brother. She was

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shown Newbold's signature in the hotel register and again declared that it was not her brother's signature. As a last resource she was shown the birth certificate of George Thomas Newman.

'That is not the birth certificate of my brother,' she stated without hesitation. 'Cyril was born at Clonbroney, Co. Longford, Ireland.'

We were just trying to sort out this tangled identity problem as it stood, when suddenly Mrs George Thomas Newman appeared on the scene. She too had read about the birth certificate mystery; but, while all the details thereon were quite accurate as regards her husband, the man in the bath could not be he, because her husband had died *twenty-two years before*, on February 24th, 1912, and lay buried in Brockley Cemetery.

'Have you any idea how this certificate came into the possession of the dead man?' I asked Mrs Newman, but she shook her head.

'Have you ever heard of Newbold or Colonel Brown?'

'Never, before I saw them mentioned in the newspapers,' was the reply.

We were therefore back where we started: According to Miss Newbold, the man who had died in the bath was not her brother, although it was his photograph on the passport bearing his name. Nor was it her brother's signature on the passport or in the hotel register. Nor was the dead man the Thomas George Newman named on the birth certificate found in Newbold's possession, for that gentleman had been dead a score of years.

Such was the position when the inquest upon the mystery man was opened before Mr Ingleby Oddie, that shrewd and famous Coroner who presided over the Westminster and Paddington Coroner's Courts. Evidence was given as to the finding of the body and Newbold's

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inability to pay his hotel bill. The various articles found in his rooms were produced, and then Miss Newbold entered the witness-box. She repeated what she had already told me.

'I have seen the body and it is not that of my brother,' she told the Coroner, and added: 'The corpse in the mortuary has pale-blue eyes; my brother had dark-brown eyes. In the passport his eyes are described as brown.'

Mr Oddie glanced at the passport. 'Yes, that is right,' he said. The Coroner held a whispered conversation with his officer and Doctor White, the Divisional Surgeon who had examined the body. The two men left the Court, and Miss Newbold continued her evidence.

'There is another point I would like to mention,' she said. 'My brother's hair was snow white. The body I have seen has iron-grey and much smoother hair.'

I was just pondering this new obstacle to our identification of the body in the bath when Doctor White bustled into the court again. He at once took his place in the witness-box.

'I have just examined the deceased's eyes again,' he began. 'By shining a bright light into the eyes I found that the pale-blue colour was entirely on the surface of the cornea. If you were looking you would find that the iris itself is *brown*. There was a pale-blue cloudiness on the surface of the cornea.'

One of the difficulties had been resolved.

Miss Newbold was recalled to the witness-box and handed a notebook in which were some entries concerning betting transactions.

'Is that your brother's writing?' asked the Coroner.

'I could not swear to that,' she replied.

'Well—is it his pocket book?'

'I could not say.'

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'How long is it since you saw your brother?'

'Over twenty years. I last saw him at Christmas, 1913.'

The Coroner leaned back in his chair and gazed up at a spot on the ceiling. 'Handwriting and people change very much as time goes on,' he remarked quietly.

He appeared to be satisfied up to a point, but I still had to find a convincing answer to the all-important question: 'Who was the man in the bath?' The inquest was adjourned for a month to await the findings of Dr Roche Lynch as to the actual cause of death, and allow me to pursue my enquiries; it was the most puzzling identification case I have ever come across. We went over every clue and every bit of information in our possession: if he was neither Newbold or Newman, then who was he?

Once more it was the Press which came to the rescue. A Mr Alfred Lewis, an American, of Albany Courtyard, Piccadilly, read the reports of the finding of the body and came to me. 'I knew Newbold,' he said, 'I've known him for thirty-five years. I knew him when he was the manager of a New York Club, years ago, and have often seen him since.'

I accompanied Mr Lewis to the mortuary where the body of the man we knew as Newbold lay upon its cold marble slab. The face of the dead man had not been affected by the scalding water so greatly as had the rest of the body; it was quite recognisable. Mr Lewis was careful in his scrutiny, but there was no hesitation as he said, 'That's Tom Newbold.'

'Are you certain?' I asked.

'There is no doubt at all.'

'His sister says that it is not the body of her brother,' I pointed out.

'There can be no doubt about it,' he replied, but

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although I felt quite sure that in this man's mind there was no room for error, the identity of the body was still not yet established to my satisfaction.

I got in touch with the New York police and asked for any information they could give me regarding Newbold's antecedents. Meanwhile, we searched our records under 'share-pushers' to see if there was anybody under any other name who resembled Newbold. There was one such man, and armed with his photograph I showed it to members of the hotel staff and asked if they could recognise it. One or two said it was Newbold, others were not quite certain.

I went to the mortuary and examined the body again. I looked closely at the finger-tips of the dead man; they were all shrivelled and macerated through immersion in the very hot water in which he had died. I telephoned the Fingerprint Bureau at the Yard, and within a few minutes Fred Cherrill (now ex-Chief Superintendent, retired) was standing beside the body.

I lifted the dead man's hand, and indicated the finger-tips. 'Do you think you can do anything with those, Fred?' I asked, and he examined them through the pocket lens he always carries. 'I want the prints to compare with those of a man on our files,' I explained.

Fred immersed himself in his work. At length he straightened himself up from over the body and said: 'Nothing can be done from the fingers as they are, but I think I could manage to get something from the under-side if the skin were removed.'

Such a thing had never been done before, but the skin was removed, as suggested, and taken to Fred. That fingerprint wizard spent hours preparing the bits of skin so that the *under-side*, with the tell-tale ridges undamaged, could be photographed. This done, the

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resultant prints were again photographed in reverse so that the ridges would be seen the right way round. After that it was a routine matter to compare these fingerprints taken from the dead with those of the man whose record and fingerprints were contained in our files. They were *not* alike, however, and this proved conclusively that they were two separate individuals; so that that gentleman was eliminated.

By this time I was quite convinced in my own mind that the dead man was Thomas (or Cyril) Gray Newbold and no other. I was eventually able to prove this beyond all doubt when, during the course of my investigation I came across a passport which Newbold had been compelled to surrender.

In the description of the holder of this passport it was mentioned that he had a Japanese eagle-tattooed on his right forearm. This description corresponded to a tattoo mark on the arm of the dead man in the bath. I was able to inform the Coroner of this and finally establish the identity of Newbold, when the inquest was resumed a month later. In the meantime, other information had come to hand from the New York police, who had a remarkable story to tell.

About fifty years before he took his life, Newbold had been convicted of forgery at Hong Kong, and sentenced to fifteen months imprisonment. On being released from prison he made his way to Shanghai, where he met a very beautiful girl, an American, who was heiress to a vast fortune. When she returned to Chicago, Newbold followed her and they were married there. From that time on, it would appear, the husband never did another day's work in his life, living wholly on his wits. After his marriage, he persuaded his wife to buy a luxurious hotel which he used as the headquarters of a chain of gambling

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dens. During this period he became known as 'Gentleman Tom,' it being generally understood that he was a member of a titled family. He became the associate of Pat Sheedy, notorious as the 'king of gamblers' throughout California, and the forerunner of the modern gangster.

Newbold was forced to leave Chicago because of his shady activities, but not before he had obtained what remained of his wife's fortune, something in the region of £200,000. What happened to his wife remains a mystery, for nothing was heard of her after 1913, and it is believed that she died about that time. although efforts to trace her were made in Washington, no clue to her disappearance was ever discovered. As for Newbold, he lived a spendthrift life on the Continent and elsewhere, visiting this country from time to time, becoming a member of West End clubs, and adding to his wealth by dealings in shares. He claimed to have been associated with Jacob Factor and Maurice Singer, whom he met in the States.

There is little doubt that Newbold had been engaged in widespread share-pushing frauds, and not long before his death he had obtained £700 by this means. But he had evidently struck a sticky patch when he failed to realise on the forged letters of allotment which he had handed to the Federated Trust and Financial Corporation. Police enquiries were becoming irksome, to say the least, and then there was his unpaid hotel bill. M. Biere, the manager, had told him plainly that unless the bill was settled his unpaying guest would have to vacate his rooms by noon on September 5th.

Before noon that day Newbold was dead by his own hand. He had taken his own desperate means of 'vacating his rooms' for the colder and less decorative surround-



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ings of a Coroner's mortuary. He left no message behind; no letter such as is often left by suicides indicating the reason for their act; nothing at all.

At the resumed inquest Dr Roche Lynch gave evidence as to the cause of death. It was as I thought: the man had taken a mixture of adaline and bromural, drugs invaluable in insomnia. These in themselves would not have proved fatal, declared the analyst, nor would the cuts on the arms, although the dead man had bled freely. But these things combined with the scalding bath would be sufficient to cause death.

Mr Ingleby Oddie, now perfectly satisfied that the dead man was in fact Thomas Gray Newbold, found that he had committed suicide by narcotic poisoning, but there was not sufficient evidence to show the state of the dead man's mind. This was certainly a proper verdict in view of the planned and determined means adopted by Newbold.

# Part Three

## THE WAR ON CRIME



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE POLICEMAN'S 'VARSITY

**T**OWARDS THE END of 1934, very shortly after Mrs Lily Major had been hanged for the murder of her husband, I was sent for by Viscount Trenchard, the then Commissioner. I had no inkling as to the reason for this summons, and was somewhat taken aback when he offered me the appointment of Chief Instructor at the Metropolitan Police College at Hendon. Naturally, I fully appreciated the honour of being selected for this important post and the confidence displayed in my ability to do justice to the job; yet I felt loath to depart from my detective career and the work of active investigation. At the same time I realised that in embarking on this new phase I would gain more and more valuable experience.

The College, the first of its kind in this country, assembled for the first time on May 10th, 1934, and was formally opened by the Prince of Wales (now the Duke of Windsor) on May 31st of that year. The Chief Instructor, who had been at the College since its inception, had received promotion and had been transferred to take charge of a Division, hence my appointment in his place. I took up my new duties on January 15th, 1935.

About this period there were criticisms of the policy which had been adopted for running the college, but I do not intend to discuss the rights or wrongs of these criticisms, as it was not my business. I had a definite job of work, a new assignment, and it was up to me to get

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on with it. I did so and found it very interesting, but far from easy; for here was quite a new set-up for training. A tremendous amount of preparatory work had already been done both before and since the opening, but there was still quite a lot of pioneering to be carried out in building up a tradition for the College. It became a sort of Mecca for all those interested in the training of police officers, distinguished visitors arriving from many parts of the world to study the methods adopted.

Viscount Trenchard, in a foreword to the first *Police College Journal*, said: 'The year 1934, I hope, will stand out as a further step in the Metropolitan Police because in that year, just over one hundred years from the inauguration of the Force, the Metropolitan Police College was started, and, with its starting, it will definitely place the police profession in a position not inferior to that of any of the other great professions in this country.'

That was the idea underlying the institution of a College: to establish a place of training for those likely to become senior officers. Today there are two such colleges: one at Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Warwickshire, for England and Wales, and one in Scotland. The selection of officers for training at these colleges is on a different footing now from what it was when I first went to Hendon: today, all students must be drawn from serving police officers—a policy with which I am in entire agreement because there is an ample supply of extremely capable officers in the various Forces throughout the land.

In the first Police College, at Hendon, a few 'direct entrants,' without any previous police experience, were accepted, but the police in general were rather suspicious of this experiment. The 'direct entrants' were certainly excellent young men of outstanding ability and good

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education, some of whom subsequently became Chief Constables in Provincial Forces, while others hold senior positions at Scotland Yard. One never heard a word against 'direct entrants' personally; it was simply that the policy was creating great uneasiness among those who had decided to make the Police their life career by joining up as constables and going through the school of practical experience. As a result, the 'direct entrant' idea was shelved and it became the rule that all students at the College must come from a police force.

On the day I entered on my duties at Hendon, Dr James Davidson, M.B., Pathological Department, Edinburgh University, also joined the staff to take charge of the new Scientific Laboratory, together with Mr A. C. D. Ensor, Solicitor, as Law Instructor.

The Commandant of the College was Colonel G. H. R. Holland, C.I.E., O.B.E., who was Chief Constable of Lincolnshire from 1931 to 1934 and who served in the Indian Police from 1908 to 1931. From 1921 to 1926 he was Principal of the Punjab Police Training College at Phillaur. The Assistant Commandant was also a man of great experience, who had been seconded from the India Police; all the other members of the staff were drawn from the Metropolitan Police.

Instruction was given on the various branches of Criminal Law, Police Duties and Procedure, also First-aid; drill and physical training also formed a regular part of the curriculum. Men with long and wide experience in detective craft dealt with all phases of crime detection, discussing and considering every type of crime and criminal, and illustrating all the methods criminals were likely to employ.

Practical exercises of every conceivable kind were carried out, from major murder investigations to dealing

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with a dog without a collar. To ensure natural surroundings for these exercises a flat was built and furnished in one of the classrooms to provide the scene of a murder or robbery, and any of the various situations with which an investigating officer might find himself faced. There were other rooms which could be used for carrying out sample raids, in the most realistic conditions, on night clubs or coining dens.

When it came to a murder enquiry we even had a 'body,' and if a student at the College was told to 'ask for Annie,' he knew precisely what was about to happen. For 'our Annie,' as she was known to one and all, was a lady who has been the victim of more murders than any detective has ever been called upon to solve. She was a very versatile lady this, who long before the sensational sex-change of recent years repeatedly changed from female to male, and back again, in less time than it takes to tell, and without any surgical operation. She could be changed into a man simply by unscrewing her female head, and substituting that of a male, and vice versa. She was the dummy we used when staging a murder and she had been strangled, shot and knifed in all manner of circumstances in order to test the quality of a budding sleuth.

I remember one occasion when 'Annie' was dumped at the side of a private road used by the pupils of the Police Motor Driving School situated next door to the College. The 'body' was placed in the position in which it was to be found, while the class which was to take part in the investigation was being briefed in a classroom. This road is quite close to the Tube railway running from Edgware to Hendon, and when a gentleman in a passing train spotted from his carriage window the dead body of a woman, he was so horrified that he left the train at the next station and very properly telephoned the police,

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giving them particulars of the location where he had seen the 'victim.' Within minutes police cars were speeding to the scene only to find that 'our Annie' had been done to death once more.

In addition to the instruction given by members of the staff, there were lectures by a number of experts, all eminent in their respective professions. These were designed to broaden the outlook of the students and encourage them to seek further knowledge in the excellent and well-stocked library at the College.

Besides the ordinary course of instruction for students, a special course of instruction for fifty senior sergeants of the Metropolitan Police was begun on January 21st, 1935, about a week after I arrived at the College, with the object of training them for promotion to the rank of Inspector. This was a very thorough and intensive course, regarded by many of the students as decidedly tough.

The Metropolitan Police Laboratory was officially opened on April 10th, 1935, and a distinguished gathering attended, including Sir John Gilmour, the then Home Secretary, Viscount Trenchard, Lord Aitken, Lord Dawson of Penn, Lord Horder, Lord Snell, Sir Edwin Deller, Sir Robert Robertson, Sir Bernard Spilsbury, and many high-ranking police officers from various parts of the country. There were also present a number of coroners, members of the legal profession and representatives from medical schools.

Sir John Gilmour, who performed the opening ceremony, commented that the Laboratory was the beginning of a department which should have been established years before, and emphasised the need for training police officers on the very latest scientific lines. Lord Aitken, who also spoke, declared that the Laboratory was a real



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step forward in the social order, as it was high time that the police in every part of the world should be equipped with all the resources of science; they would then be in a better position to combat the wiles of criminals, who were themselves equipped with all the resources of modern science in their war on society. It was interesting to hear from his Lordship that at Edinburgh and Glasgow Chairs of Professorship in medico-legal science had been in existence for many years. At Edinburgh he thought there had been one for a hundred years.

The work of the Laboratory covers a large field and involves the application of biological, chemical and physical sciences. It is threefold in character:

1. The investigation of all sorts of materials, from dust found in the turn-ups of a pair of trousers to a thread adhering to a button, and from tests to determine a man's blood group to analysing the contents of a victim's stomach for poison.
2. Teaching police officers what to look for, and what to do with specific articles found at the scene of crime or elsewhere.
3. To carry on unceasing research into all possible scientific methods for the detection of crime, and the bringing of criminals to justice.

The Laboratory is now housed at Scotland Yard, having been moved there after the war. That it has justified itself as one of the most valuable aids to investigation in the Force is something that nobody will deny.

In 1936 another advance was made in the war against crime, when a new method of detective training was introduced, following the recommendations of a committee which had been sitting to discuss the matter since 1933. What is now known as the Metropolitan

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Detective Training School, Hendon, was started. Before 1936 all detectives in the Metropolitan Police, and a number from other Forces, were trained at Scotland Yard. At the new school, adjacent to the Police College, a new syllabus was put into operation, embodying all the latest scientific methods of crime detection.

The first course was of an experimental nature for Detective Inspectors, and was attended by twelve Inspectors from County and City forces, three from the Metropolitan Police, two from New Zealand and one from Ceylon. These officers were invited to criticise the course and offer any suggestions which they thought might improve it. As a result of their observations some minor alterations were made, and from that time onward the Detective Training School has successfully carried out its allotted task. Since its inception it has been attended by students from many countries throughout the world and has enjoyed an increasingly high reputation. I count it a privilege to have been associated with the School right from its start until my retirement, and no praise is too high for the untiring work of the fine staff of instructors there.

In November, 1936, I was promoted to the rank of Superintendent, but retained my role of Chief Instructor at the College. I remained there till September, 1938, when I was appointed Detective Superintendent C.I.D. in charge of the South-Eastern District of London. This is a large and thickly-populated Division covering a very wide area south of the Thames.

Just before Christmas that year I remember a police officer of the district remarking to me: 'You're new here, sir, but I wouldn't mind betting things liven up over Christmas. I don't know why, but we always seem to get a murder round about that time.'

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'Let's hope I break the gloomy spell,' I replied, and it seemed as though I had, for Christmas came and went without a single tragedy to cast its blight over the festive season. 'Looks as though your prophecy has misfired,' I remarked to the officer; and then, on the morning of January 2nd, 1939, I was sitting in my office at the District Headquarters, Peckham, when I was handed a message which had just come in over the telephone. 'Body of woman found at — Hotel, York Road. Foul play suspected,' was the purport of the message.

In company with Detective Inspectors Wheatley, Fury and Wilson, I made my way to the hotel named. It was one of many similar places in that unsalubrious district near Waterloo Station, the biggest railway terminus on the south side of the Thames. (All these hotels were later demolished to prepare a site for the Festival of Britain.)

We were shown up to the room where the dead girl lay. She was in bed, her head lying between the two top pillows. There was no doubt about the foul play; the edge of a white bed-quilt had been stuffed into her mouth so that it was forced open to its very limit; rammed in with such force as to leave an imprint of its pattern on the tongue of the dead girl. A man's handkerchief had also been packed into her mouth over the quilt, and pushed far back into the throat, leaving only the merest edge showing. Another portion of the quilt had been forced into the girl's mouth with such violence as to have caused injury to her tongue and throat. Livid marks on each side of her neck bore eloquent testimony to the cruel fingers which had choked the life out of her.

The body was left untouched until the arrival of Dr Keith Simpson, the famous pathologist. In a case of murder, as is well known, it is one of the essentials of

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detective work that a body should not be moved until it has been examined by a competent medical man. While waiting, therefore, for the arrival of the pathologist, we carried out an examination of the room. On an old-fashioned wash-stand was an empty sherry bottle and a tumbler. Over the back of a chair at the side of the bed hung the dead girl's clothes. On the seat of the chair lay a woman's handbag, which yielded the first clue to the identity of the victim, for it contained a medical card bearing the name 'Peggy Pentecost' with an address at 'School House, Tonbridge'; a Health Insurance card with the information, 'P. Pentecost, 148 Elm Drive, Brighton'; a letter, undated and unsigned, but beginning, 'My Darling'; and a railway ticket from Tonbridge to Seaford. Covering the mouth of a water-jug was a man's handkerchief. Later on, when the handkerchief was removed from the dead girl's mouth, it was found to be similar to the one on the jug.

There were no signs of disorder about the room, and it was clear that the girl had lost consciousness very rapidly, while the murderer must have carried out his crime with frenzied speed. From the manager of the hotel we learned that the pair had arrived about 9 p.m. on New Year's Eve. The man signed the register as 'Mr and Mrs Armstrong, of Bydown, Seaford.'

For the next few hours the telephone wires between our headquarters and the police stations at Brighton, Tonbridge and Seaford were kept busy. The police in these areas were asked to make enquiries at all the addresses named, and let us have all the information that could be obtained regarding Peggy Pentecost, together with the names of any male friends.

From the Seaford police it was learned that 'Bydown' was the name of a school where one Harry Armstrong

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was employed as a parlourman, whatever that might be. A rather significant fact also emerged from the same source: between December 23rd, 1938, and January 8th, 1939, £28 had apparently been stolen from a cash-box kept in the school matron's wardrobe. Armstrong's parents, it was discovered, lived at Camberley, and he had stayed with them over the Christmas holiday. On his return to Bydown on December 28th, he asked to have the week-end off as he was going to stay with his sweetheart at her home in Elm Drive, Brighton; her name was Peggy Pentecost. So much for Harry Armstrong: the link between him and the dead girl was established.

The Brighton police were equally informative as regards the dead girl. She was the eldest daughter of a van driver, who on leaving school had been employed in domestic service at Seaford Boy's College, Seaford. It was while there that she met Harry Armstrong, who was employed at a girl's school called 'Bydown'. They fell in love, the man was taken to his sweetheart's home and introduced to her parents; Peggy and Harry spent their summer holiday together at the Camberley home of Armstrong's parents. Just before Christmas the girl had been temporarily transferred from the Seaford School to the School House, Tonbridge, hence the address on the medical card.

All this information reached us within an hour or two. Messages flashed between us, filling in the blanks and producing a coherent picture of the circumstances immediately preceding the tragedy. Mr Pentecost, the dead girl's father, was brought up to London to identify the body. Up till that time his daughter, it seemed, had never given him any serious cause for worry, although he told us that she was very temperamental, 'and if corrected

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for any little thing she would go out of the room,' but return later.'

He knew Harry Armstrong, and while he felt that there was too great a disparity in their ages (Armstrong was 36, nearly twenty years older than his sweetheart), they seemed so fond of one another that he raised no objection to their engagement. Harry came to stay with them over the week-end, said Mr Pentecost, but after he had had a slight misunderstanding with his daughter she and her lover went off together, and he never saw her alive again. He thought they had gone to stay with Armstrong's people.

From the description we had been given of the man who had stayed with Peggy at the hotel, there was no doubt that Harry Armstrong was the person we wanted to interview, and an 'All Stations' message was sent out. Nobody could say at what time Armstrong left the hotel on the night of the murder. No one saw him go, and it could only be conjectured that it was just before midnight on January 1st when he left that room in which his dead sweetheart lay.

At 3.30 p.m. the following day, Police Sergeant Ford was called to a café in Ivor Place, Marylebone. Outside the premises he saw a man trying to enter the café. The proprietress complained about the man's conduct, and Ford ordered him to go away.

'I'm not going away for you or anybody else,' replied the man truculently, trying to push his way in. He was warned again, and on his declaring that he was 'going in and nobody was going to stop him,' the worthy sergeant was compelled to take the man into custody. At Albany Street Police Station he was charged with using insulting behaviour and gave his name as Thomas King. The address he gave was 'Bydown,' Seaford, Sussex.

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On reserve duty at Albany Street that day was a young police constable named Maclean. When the 'All Stations' message was received from Information Room at Scotland Yard giving a description of Armstrong, and mention of his employment at 'Bydown,' Seaford, Maclean was struck by the similarity of the Seaford address and the description of the man. He called the attention of the Station Officer to the coincidences. 'King's' property was searched, and in addition to £5 in notes and over £1 in silver being found on him, there was a postcard addressed to Mrs Pentecost, 145 Elm Grove, Brighton. It contained the following message: 'Dear Mother, this is the best way out, Love, Harry.'

Within a few minutes we received the news that Armstrong had been detained, and within ten hours of the discovery of the girl's dead body he had been arrested and charged with her murder. One could wish that all murderers were found and brought to justice thus quickly, but in this instance it was undoubtedly due to the keen observation of P.C. Maclean in noticing the similarity of the Seaford address; but for that, the arrest of Armstrong might well have been delayed.

I was interested in Armstrong's reaction when Detective Inspector Furry arrested him in my presence. He assumed a somewhat cocksure attitude, showed no remorse or horror on hearing of his sweetheart's death, and when told of the charge, replied: 'I am saying nothing. I was not the last person with her. I can prove that I was not in York Road last night after ten o'clock. I can prove where I was, but I am not going to say now where I was. I am saying nothing. I neither deny nor admit anything. I'll tell the magistrate in the morning.'

The first words of a prisoner when charged with any offence are always regarded as particularly important,

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and apart from the bravado of this ready-made denial, Armstrong seemed to possess more than usual knowledge of arrest procedure with his phrase about telling the magistrate.

His fingerprints were taken and sent to the Fingerprint Bureau, whereupon it was discovered that Armstrong had been convicted on no less than eight occasions for crimes ranging from attempted murder to house and shop-breaking, from being 'drunk and disorderly' and theft to attempted suicide. The story of the attempted murder charge, afterwards reduced to 'wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm,' was interesting in view of the way Peggy Pentecost had died.

One March night in 1925, two Irish wolfhounds were being taken out for their nightly run over the golf course at Sunningdale, when suddenly, as they nosed around a shelter, they stopped dead with hackles bristling, and gave vent to short, sharp barks. The gardener who was exercising the animals approached the shelter and was horrified to see a woman lying on the ground, her head and clothing smothered with blood.

The police were summoned, and it was found that the woman's head was lying in a pool of congealed blood. She was unconscious but breathing. She had been stabbed in the throat, the knife being a sort of dagger with a deer's foot for handle, which was still sticking in the wound. The constable removed it and rendered first-aid while awaiting the arrival of the doctor. P.C. North recognised the injured woman as one who lived locally. He had often seen her in the company of Harry Armstrong, whom he also knew; so that when the woman started to murmur, 'Don't, Harry,' he came to the conclusion that she was referring to Armstrong.

Another police officer, sent to Armstrong's address,



found him in bed fast asleep. On being awakened, he admitted quarrelling with the girl and stabbing her. He was sent to prison for fifteen months, while his unhappy victim spent the next few years in a hospital.

This was the man arrested for the murder of Peggy Peptecost, but there was still much to do before completing the case for the prosecution. Every little link in the chain of evidence had still to be welded together, and this meant further enquiries.

The sherry bottle and glass were sent to Fred Cherrill, who tested them and found prints made by the finger and thumb of the accused man. It also had to be established that the handkerchief stuffed into the girl's mouth belonged to her lover, and from Armstrong's lodgings in Seaford, where he lived with a Mr and Mrs Passingham, two white handkerchiefs similar to the one used to suffocate his sweetheart were taken from a drawer. The landlady was also able to identify as belonging to her lodger the suitcase, sports jacket and pyjamas which Armstrong had left behind when fleeing from the hotel.

One rather pathetic relic of the dead girl's romance was found in the room occupied by Armstrong. It was a Christmas card with a yellow rose painted on the outside, bearing the words, 'With fondest love.' Inside, written in pencil, was the message: 'To my darling husband from his ever loving wife.'

The fatal handkerchief was finally proved to belong to the accused by his mother, who recognised it as one of a set which she had given him at Christmas. From his father we heard how, during the summer when the girl and his son were staying with him on holiday, Peggy received a letter from another man, much to Armstrong's distress. It did not take long to locate this man, and

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when interviewed he gave a frank and detailed account of his association with the dead girl. We had to check up on him because of the suggestion made by Armstrong on his arrest, referring to Peggy, that he was 'not the last person to be with her.'

There can be little doubt from what this man said, and from a letter he had received from Peggy not long before she met her death, that while she was undoubtedly fond of Harry Armstrong, she did not mind going around with the other man whom she addressed as 'Darling D——' and to whom she signed herself, 'Yours for ever Peggy.'

He candidly admitted that he knew all about Harry Armstrong, and said that while Harry went out with the girl on Tuesday, her day out, she used to go out with him all the rest of the week. The last time he saw her alive was when he accompanied her to the School House, Tonbridge, on the occasion of her temporary transfer from the Seaford Boy's College.

It looked very much as though Harry Armstrong had taken the girl away on the money he stole from the wardrobe of the school where he was employed. His wages there were just under £5 a week. On his return from the Christmas holidays he asked his landlady to let his rent run for a week, as he was short of money. He was also borrowing cigarettes from his workmates up till December 30th when he left to meet his sweetheart. On that day he went into a local shop and changed £3 worth of silver. Later on he bought a platinum engagement ring, and then spent other money on fares to London, where their brief honeymoon came to its tragic end. The fact that when he was arrested he had five pound notes and a large amount of silver was rather significant considering that he had received no wages

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since December 23rd, when he left Seaford to spend Christmas at his sweetheart's home.

It will never be known what actually happened in that squalid little hotel bedroom to bring about so grim a climax. There was nothing to show, at 9.30 on the night of the tragedy, that he had any thoughts of murder in his mind, for he borrowed a corkscrew from the landlord of the hotel, saying it was to open a bottle of sherry to 'celebrate the New Year.' Yet within an hour or two—Dr Keith Simpson put the time of death as between 9 and 11.30 p.m.—Peggy Pentecost lay dead at the hands of her lover.

One would suppose that with all the circumstantial evidence piled up against him the last defence Armstrong would have relied on would be that of an alibi. There was no question of identity, for the hotel manager and other members of the staff had no difficulty in declaring that the accused was the man who had shared the room for two nights with Peggy Pentecost. The handkerchief stuffed into the dead girl's mouth was certainly Armstrong's. His pyjamas were found in the bedroom, as were his sports jacket and the suitcase with which he arrived. If this were not sufficient, his fingerprints were upon the empty sherry bottle and the tumbler.

What, then, was the prisoner's story when at length he appeared before Mr Justice Humphreys at the Old Bailey on March 2nd, 1939?

He told the court that after he and the girl had drunk some sherry on January 1st, he left the hotel about 9.30 and went to another hotel and a public house, where he indulged in some more drink. Just before 10 p.m. he went into a café and got into conversation with some women. He went with one of the women in a taxi to a hotel at Paddington and stayed the night with her. Of

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course; this was not the first time we had heard<sup>9</sup> this story; we had already investigated it before the<sup>9</sup> trial began, and found it to be baseless.

Apart from this, the hotel manager had seen Armstrong going to the toilet at 11 p.m. on the night of the murder, so that his story of being in the company of other women at 10 p.m., and not returning to the hotel where he had left Peggy Pentecost, did not carry much weight with the jury, who, after an absence of just over half an hour, brought in a verdict of 'Guilty.' Even then Armstrong did not lose the sang-froid which had characterised his manner throughout.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' he said in addressing the jury, 'I appreciate everything you have done. No doubt you have had a very difficult task. In spite of your verdict, I am not guilty of the murder of Peggy Pentecost.'

Like a douche of ice-cold water on the electric atmosphere of the court came the voice of Mr Justice Humphreys, saying, as he passed sentence of death: 'I am afraid you have brought to an end a bad life of which the jury knew nothing. . .'

Nineteen days later, on March 21st, Harry Armstrong was hanged at Wandsworth Prison.

If throughout this story I seem to have eulogised the police, let me now pay tribute to the public.

South-East London was one of the most blitz-battered areas in the country during the last war, and I shall never forget the courage of the people in the district in which I was serving when Hitler's minions were scattering death and destruction. I watched their reactions and felt very proud. I saw them emerge from their shelters when the last raider had turned for home, to view what remained of their houses, often reduced to a pile of rubble, their homes a sorry mess beneath. I saw them at

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the very height of fire and fury, bravely assisting in the rescue of their neighbours with bombs still falling around them; often at risk of their own lives. And one day when the last marauder had streaked away into the darkness, I saw an old and fragile woman clamber on to the ruins of what had once been her home to plant a Union Jack atop the rubble.

No heroics; nothing but an example of the indomitable spirit which animated Londoners during that fateful time. The heavy raids not only failed to intimidate the people, it roused them to action and a display of courage of a very high order.

Those were grim days, indeed, which kept us constantly busy in a variety of ways. My job was mainly in connection with the protection of property, which became very vulnerable on account of the damage to premises. We had a few cases of looting, but none of them serious. In fact, these offences were little more than ordinary stealing, but conditions lent them a more sinister aspect. In my mind I had always associated 'looting' with the concerted action of a mob out to steal on the grand scale; I am glad to say there was nothing of that sort.

The police machinery worked smoothly and well, and in the heaviest of raids they carried on regardless of danger. As it certainly needed to be, the Force was fully staffed; for in addition to the regular police, there was the First Police Reserve (pensioners who rejoined for duration of war), the Special Constabulary and the War Reserve, a body recruited for service during the war. A mighty good job of work was performed by all.

One of the War Reserve worthies who had been to some three bombing incidents during one night became covered from head to foot in brick-dust. Having done all he could, he was on his way back to headquarters when

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he ran into his Superintendent. Noticing his dust-plastered condition, the Superintendent asked him: 'Where do you think you're going to Jack?'

Jack was a man of smallish figure, but a typical cockney. He held up a finger, looked up at the sky, and replied in a quiet voice: 'Keep quiet, Sir. The so-and-so's are following me abaht.'

On another occasion I and my wife were travelling by tram from Lewisham to Eltham. It was a Saturday night and in spite of a heavy raid being in progress none of the passengers seemed to be very greatly concerned as we passed through the blacked-out streets. One or two of them had plainly been having a good time before catching the last tram home. It was a tense ride, and what impressed me most was the coolness of the conductress as she went about her job. There was no sign of her being scared despite the din of falling bombs and the shattering scream and crack of anti-aircraft guns.

She had just reached a dear old lady to ask for her fare when a fresh inferno of noise crashed through the darkness. For a moment there was a brief silence, broken only by the voice of the old lady as she shouted: 'Hold your bloomin' noise, Hitler. I can't hear what the girl is saying.' Everyone in the tram just roared with laughter as she dived down in her purse for the few coppers to pay her fare.

Nor were the police lacking in courage in carrying out their duty. They went on with the job, never knowing when they might 'get it.' Perhaps it was just as well that we were always pretty busy during an enemy raid, and had no time to think about that side of it.

I remember one night when four of my officers, Detective Inspectors Haynes and Sullivan, and Sergeants Davis and Pike, had to keep an important appointment

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near Catford to interview a man in connection with a certain case. There was a particularly heavy raid on this night, the Germans concentrating their attack on the railways in the area. The meeting-place was a public house almost on top of the railway, and things became so hot that the man they were interviewing suggested that it might be a bit safer if they all adjourned to his home a little way off from the network of railway lines which appeared to be the target of the night.

Sergeant Pike had another appointment at Lewisham and left to keep it, remarking that he would come along later. The other three accompanied the interviewee to his private house. They were just in the midst of their business there, the interrogation being well on its way, when a screaming hiss came from the sky. The bomb scored a direct hit on the very house which had been sought for safety, and all four men were killed outright. It fell to my sad lot to join in tracing the bodies of my three colleagues after they had been taken from the ruins; I found them lying in one of the many mortuaries in the area. The row upon row of bodies, many of them crushed or mutilated beyond recognition, was a gruesome sight indeed.

Had Sergeant Pike not had another appointment, he too would have been killed. The breaches in our ranks were filled, and once more it was 'business as usual.' It was always a relief from the tension occasioned by such incidents as these, when one embarked upon a bit of real police work in the way of investigation and of course, there was the usual round of cases, large and small, insignificant and important.

An odd sort of case cropped up about this time—late 1940—and indeed had it not been for the eagle eye of a first-class investigator, Detective Inspector Robert Lee

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(now Chief Superintendent Lee of the Yard's Flying Squad), it might have been passed over as a case of death from natural causes.

A very old lady was found dead in a house in the Catford district. So emaciated was her body that her appearance was the nearest thing to a skeleton I have ever seen. I visited the house with Mr Lee. It was in the depths of winter, and the place presented a most appalling spectacle. All the pipes were frozen up, there was not a scrap of food in the house, and from the condition of the body we decided that the circumstances surrounding the death of this aged woman required further investigation.

It had been arranged that a post-mortem examination should be carried out by the Divisional Police Surgeon at 5 p.m. on the day of our visit; but this was stopped on the authority of the Coroner, who enlisted the services of the well-known pathologist, Dr Davies, of Harley Street.

The latter reported that the old lady had died from starvation. Enquiries elicited that she had lived with her son, who was supposed to look after his mother, but had failed to do so: he was in the habit of leaving her alone in the house throughout the day. His mother was quite incapable of doing anything for herself, and he had even failed to provide enough food to keep the old lady alive. It was a shocking case of neglect, and he was charged with manslaughter, being eventually sent to prison for six months. I believe that this was the first case of its kind for about two hundred years.

I shall never forget the revolting conditions under which that poor old woman had died. But perhaps even more revolting was the tragedy of two old ladies, whose deaths had all the appearance of murder. They were



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sisters, both wealthy, and they lived together in a well-furnished house not far from Blackheath.

As they had not been seen about for some time, the matter was reported to the police, who on investigation found the dead bodies of these two women lying near each other in one room of the house. At first it looked as though they had been violently murdered, so terrible were their injuries, but a post-mortem examination proved that both had died from natural causes. From the position of the bodies it appeared that one sister had been attending the other at the moment of death, and the shock had killed her.

But how had they received such ghastly lacerations to their bodies? In the same room with the bodies of the sisters was that of their pet dog. Again it required no stretch of the imagination to conjure up the grim scene which had been enacted in that room: first the death of one sister followed by the death of the other through shock; then the dog, maddened by hunger, driven to attack the bodies to appease its cravings, until it, too, had curled up and died.

Such was the solution of what appeared to be a brutal and mysterious murder. But our task was not yet over, for we discovered that the two old ladies possessed property to the value of some £13,000, and we had to try and trace any relatives of the deceased. Despite all our efforts we found not a single trace of anybody even remotely related to the sisters, so that in the end their fortune passed to the Treasury.

In July, 1941, Alec Bell, who had succeeded John Horwell as Chief Constable of the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard about eleven months previously, died rather suddenly, and I was appointed to the vacant post. I started my duties as, Chief Constable with somewhat mixed

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feelings, for, like many other officers in the Force, I had a great regard for Alec Bell, who had proved himself to be extremely efficient and capable in the role I was now about to assume. His sudden death at a comparatively early age was a great loss to the Service.

The duties of the Chief Constable (C.I.D.), now called Deputy Commander, consist in co-ordinating investigations, supervising and visiting scenes of crimes in special cases; so that he is sometimes referred to as the Chief Investigator. It is not, to my mind, a very apt description of the job, because besides the above-mentioned duties he has to assist with all sorts of administrative duties. In very special cases he may be called upon to direct an investigation and supervise the work of the officers whom he has instructed to make the necessary enquiries; he must then be in constant contact with the officers investigating cases, often in various parts of the country. He must also preside at conferences, particularly the regular monthly conference attended by all Senior Officers from the Divisions, and those attached to Scotland Yard.

At this conference every subject of interest to the Force in general, and the C.I.D. in particular, is discussed in detail; and these talks are obviously of great value in connection with matters both of administration and of investigation.

During my sojourn at the Police College I had the pleasure of meeting many Chief Constables from England, Wales and Scotland. I got to know many of them intimately, so it was not surprising that when one or other of them was faced with a rather sticky murder, they would 'phone me direct at the Yard, and talk things over with me, giving me all the essential facts and discussing the position. Invariably, as the result of these

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little personal chats, a couple of Yard officers would depart to assist the local officers engaged on the investigation.

Time passed very quickly, and I enjoyed every minute of my office as Chief Constable, or Deputy Commander. When, therefore, in 1944 I was offered a position of considerable importance in the British Police of the Control Commission (then being formed for duty in the conquered areas on the Continent), I decided to refuse the offer. I felt that all along my life had been wrapped up with the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard, and that no matter how tempting an offer might be, it was with the C.I.D. that I should remain.

It was a fortunate decision on my part because in January, 1945, I was appointed Deputy Assistant Commissioner. This title was altered later to that of Commander, which rank I held until my retirement on January 31st, 1954. It was the first time that anyone from the ranks in the C.I.D. had attained this position, which had hitherto been held by gentlemen learned in the law. I soon found that my burning of midnight oil in order to perform adequately my duties at the Police College had not been in vain, as the knowledge I acquired during my spell as Chief Instructor turned out to be extremely useful in my new office. As the official deputy to the Assistant Commissioner, I had to take charge during his absence.

Between July, 1941, and January, 1954, many sensational cases came before me to be dealt with. I had to make important decisions on the action to be taken in connection with them, and this entailed frequent conferences with the officers engaged on the investigations.

All officers engaged in major enquiries are expected, through their superior officers, to keep Scotland Yard

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up to date regarding their investigations. Quite frequently the Assistant Commissioner C.I.D. requires the attendance of the officers in charge of an enquiry in order to discuss the case. In many instances this is not necessary as the suspect is clearly indicated and it is simply a matter of getting the necessary evidence to justify an arrest.

In those cases where the evidence is weak or doubtful, however, a conference is held and the whole position is discussed from every angle, and a decision made on the appropriate action to be taken in view of all the circumstances. In other cases, where there are no such doubts, and it is apparent that only one action is possible, i.e. an arrest, then instructions to that effect are given.

Such were the sort of problems I normally met on becoming Chief Constable and Commander C.I.D.; but now and again things became rather more complex, as for example, where it was felt that an arrest would not be justified. Suspicion, no matter how strong, is not enough in English law to warrant arrests, even though the public, when wide Press publicity indicates somebody as a strong suspect, are likely to react by asking indignantly: 'Why don't they arrest him (or her)?'

Such an arrest would, of course, be both dangerous and foolish if one felt sure, knowing *all* the facts in the case, that no court would uphold such an action. -

An instance of this kind cropped up a year or two ago, when we had to decide whether or not a man should be arrested on a charge of murder. The Detective Superintendent in charge of the enquiry returned to the Yard to take part in a conference. Every scrap of evidence he had gathered together was thoroughly tested to see whether it justified an arrest. As a result of the conference, it was decided that no arrest should be made.

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Two years went by, and then the family of the dead girl (who was undoubtedly murdered) instigated a private prosecution against this man. They had employed a private detective to carry out enquiries, and on his report applied for a warrant of arrest from the local Bench of Magistrates. This was granted and the man appeared at the police court on a charge of murder. After a hearing lasting four days, during which over thirty witnesses were called, the Bench, comprised of three men and two women, unanimously decided that there was 'not sufficient evidence to justify putting the accused on trial.'

Any crime which savours of the unusual, or has some perplexing angles to it, is invariably the subject of conference between the investigating officer and his superiors at the Yard. In the February of 1942 there occurred a series of callous and calculated murders which created great alarm among frequenters of the West End of London. The fact that all lights were dimmed and the whole place shrouded in the sombre darkness of the black-out did nothing to assuage that alarm, occasioned as it was by four murders all committed within one week, all of them accompanied by horrible mutilations.

They occurred in the order: On February 9th, Evelyn Hamilton, a chemist's assistant, was murdered in an air-raid shelter in Montague Place, Bayswater; on February 10th, Evelyn Oatley was murdered at a flat in Wardour Street; on February 13th, Mrs Margaret Lowe was murdered in Gosfield Street, just off Tottenham Court Road; while on the same day Mrs Doris Jouannet was murdered in a flat at Sussex Gardens, Paddington.

Two of the murders were committed in the 'D' Division area, i.e. north of Oxford Street; the other two being committed in the 'C' Division area, south of

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Oxford Street. Consequently the police officers in charge of these two separate Divisions carried out individual investigations.

There was such a curious similarity about the four crimes that, when the reports of the enquiries reached me in my role of Chief Constable, I decided to visit the headquarters of both Divisions, and glean all the information I could concerning the two murders in each area. What I learned from both sources led me to the opinion that all four murder investigations should be handed over to one senior officer from Scotland Yard. I reported my views to the Assistant Commissioner C.I.D., who entirely agreed. Chief Inspector (now Chief Superintendent) Greeno was appointed to the job.

Ted Greeno is one of the Yard's astutest detectives, and lost no time in getting to work. His tenacity was soon rewarded, for he succeeded in obtaining sufficient evidence to connect all four murders with one man, a young airman named Cummins. In view of the widespread alarm existing as a result of the four murders, one after another, and to allay any further fears that a modern 'Jack the Ripper' might still be at large in the West End, a very unusual step was decided on.

Cummins was charged with all four murders, the names of the four victims being mentioned when he appeared before the magistrate at Bow Street Police Court. Thus the public mind was set at rest concerning the identity of the person suspected of being a quadruple murderer, and by the fact of his being in custody. When brought to trial at the Old Bailey, however, Cummins, in accordance with the usual practice, was only indicted on the one charge—the murder of Mrs Evelyn Oatley. Found guilty, he was hanged, putting an end to one of the most unusual cases that has ever come before me.

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All detective operations in the Metropolitan Police are, in the end controlled, I would emphasise, from headquarters at Scotland Yard. The efforts of uniform and plain clothes officers alike are centralised, so that no matter in which of the Divisions a crime may take place, the report of the Chief Superintendent of the area will provide the chiefs at Scotland Yard with a complete overall picture of the investigation during the whole of its progress.

I could give many examples of how this central control by the Assistant Commissioner and Commander C.I.D., in conference with the officers in charge of the enquiries, has assisted in bringing a criminal to book. As in local investigations, so it is in provincial and international enquiries.

During my service as Commander, I naturally came into personal contact with the chiefs of detective departments from all over the world. Consequently the story of my years at Scotland Yard would not be complete without reference to such crime-fighting organisations as the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the United States, more popularly known as the F.B.I., and Interpol (International Criminal Police Commission) which operates throughout Europe and some thirty-eight countries all over the world, whose police forces are linked together in their common object—to get their man whatever his nationality. The close co-operation existing between us and these 'foreign C.I.D.'s' certainly merits some detailed consideration.

## CHAPTER TWO

### TWO GREAT ORGANISATIONS

**T**HE FEDERAL BUREAU of Investigation is not, in construction or function, anything like an American C.I.D., except that it, too, of course, is intended to fight crime. It operates as an arm of the United States Department of Justice headed by the Attorney-General, whereas in our Government there is no Department or Ministry of Justice as such, unless one can so describe the Home Office, which, in addition to its many administrative functions concerning home affairs—such as matters connected with mines and factories, licensing, burials and aliens, etc., is responsible for the control of the police throughout England and Wales.

While the C.I.D. is mainly concerned with investigations into crimes, the F.B.I. investigates not only crimes of every kind from kidnapping and bank hold-ups to murder and jewel thefts, but also all violations of the Federal laws, including the activities of spies and enemy agents.

The C.I.D. is not called upon to enquire into ordinary breaches of the law other than those of a criminal nature, and spies and enemy agents are the quarry of either the Special Branch at Scotland Yard, or of M.I.5, a branch of our Secret Service around which has been woven that aura of mystery beloved of novelists. The C.I.D. is part of a police force in this country, whereas the F.B.I. is a separate entity.



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So far as the machinery of crime detection goes, the F.B.I. and the C.I.D. run a close race. Each has its Fingerprint Bureau, its Record Office, its Communications System by means of a radio network, its equivalent of our 999 information system and its own Scientific Laboratory.

Unlike our C.I.D., however, F.B.I. men are armed, undergoing special training in the use of firearms, including machine guns. Nor do they hesitate to 'shoot it out' with any gangster who may decide to make a fight for it: this, in fact, is how F.B.I. agents came to be known as 'G-Men.'

It was in September, 1933, that a party of F.B.I. men surrounded a house in Memphis where lurked a man known throughout the American underworld as 'Machine-Gun' Kelly. For over two months the F.B.I. Agents, as they are called, were tracking him down, until they eventually ran him and his wife to earth. Kelly was wanted for kidnapping Mr Charles F. Urschel, a wealthy Oklahoma City oil magnate.

One of the most notorious gangsters of the early 1930's the gunman had won his name from underworld reports that he could write his name with machine-gun bullets. It was armed with such a weapon that he and an accomplice kidnapped the millionaire from his palatial home and held him to ransom. Nine days later after payment of £17,400 Mr Urschel was released.

That was in July, 1933. F.B.I. Agents got on to the track of Kelly and at length located him at Memphis. They closed round the house. 'We are Federal officers,' they cried. 'Come out with your hands up . . .'

Covered by the guns of the others a couple of Agents entered the house. There crouched the man they wanted, the gangster who in his day had not hesitated to hand

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out death to those who stood in his way, who now, with the guns of his pursuers at the ready, presented a far from courageous picture. He cowered in a corner of the room where he had sought refuge, and the heavy jowls of his white face twitched with fear as he reached trembling hands over his head.

'Don't shoot, G-Men,' he whimpered. 'Don't shoot.'

From that time onward F.B.I. Agents became known throughout the underworld as 'G-Men'—this being short for Government men. Kelly was sent to prison for life, dying in Leavenworth Gaol in July, 1954.

On the wall of a room in the Department of Justice building, Washington, D.C., there hangs the famous seal of the F.B.I. It is blue and gold in colour and engraved on the crown of the seal, underneath the Scales of Justice, are the words, 'Fidelity, Bravery, Integrity.' Nor will anyone with any knowledge of the 'G-Men's' exploits quarrel with this tribute to their achievements.

'Machine-Gun Kelly' was but one of the scores of desperate criminals killed or brought to justice by the F.B.I. John Dillinger, the notorious 'Public Enemy No. 1,' was shot dead while resisting arrest in a Chicago highway. 'Pretty Boy' Floyd met a similar fate when tracked down to a farm in Ohio. 'Baby Face' Nelson also fell to the guns of three F.B.I. men when he tried to fight it out with them. Scores of others met like fates, or else were rounded up to face lifelong imprisonment in the dread ocean gaol of Alcatraz, or some equally unpleasant prison.

Nor did the F.B.I. Agents escape scot-free in these trigger battles with gangsters. Many of them lost their lives, and beneath the seal which I have mentioned is a bronze memorial plaque bearing the names of those who died while doing their duty.

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I learned much more about the work of the F.B.I. after attaining the rank of Chief Constable and subsequently Commander C.I.D., as I had thereafter a closer personal, as well as official, association in the exchange of information regarding criminals on both sides of the Atlantic. I was frequently in touch by correspondence with that great crime-fighting genius, John Edgar Hoover, Director of the Bureau, and among my good friends in this country is a leading member of the F.B.I. in England. We have worked together on many a case and always in complete co-operation and harmony towards the one main object which inspires both the Yard and the F.B.I.—the campaign against crime. I had the pleasure of spending some time with Mr Hugh Clegg, Deputy Chief of the F.B.I. (now retired), on one of his visits to England in connection with the Fuchs case. He was most interested in our methods at the Yard, and we were able to exchange views on the best way to carry on our respective tasks. Such personal contacts are of vital importance for any matter requiring joint investigation. So many more aspects can be discussed, and clearer views expressed, in man-to-man talks, than is possible through communication by letter.

In this sort of way the F.B.I. works hand-in-glove with Scotland Yard when it comes to the rounding-up of criminals, and so does Interpol, the great international organisation with its Central Bureau, or Headquarters, in Paris. Until Interpol was formed there had been little effective machinery for co-ordinating the efforts of police in different parts of the world, to put a stop to the activities of criminals who travelled from country to country reaping a rich harvest by means of all sorts of crimes, from smuggling and dope-peddling to confidence tricks and jewel robberies.

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The difficulties in setting up such an organisation as Interpol were formidable. Even in our own country, it required some effort to maintain co-ordination and satisfactory relations between the various police forces, each with its own local jurisdiction and headquarters; and over here there were not different systems of law, language and customs, to complicate matters. So there were great obstacles to be overcome before the swift and direct exchange of information about criminals could take place between different countries. In former days this interchange took place by direct communication and through numerous police forces, resulting in delays which often defeated the ends of justice. Today, the thirty-eight police forces who are part of Interpol can communicate with each other by telephone, cable or radio swiftly enough to provide a weapon of tremendous striking power against the crook (who relies on speed and distance for his get-away). In other words, the formation of Interpol has certainly been of very real help to the work of crime detection, which requires both skill and knowledge of modern developments in order to keep pace with the ever-increasing efficiency and skill of modern criminals.

All information for Interpol from police forces in this country is passed to Scotland Yard, who deliver it without delay to the headquarters in Paris. The Information Room at the Yard is in daily telephonic communication with this international organisation, either giving details of suspects, or gaining speedy information regarding crooks who may have been rounded up in any of the member States. All these are also in constant communication with Interpol headquarters in Paris, so that there is an unceasing exchange of information regarding the movements of criminals or suspects.

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Of the many successes which have been achieved through the machinery of Interpol because it can circularise information with such swiftness, the case which stands out in my mind is that of the most 'circularised' murderer I have ever known. He was a coloured man in the U.S. Forces stationed in this country during the war: he was wanted for murder by the police in Warwickshire, but all trace of him was lost, and he was missing from his unit.

His photograph, fingerprints, description and every known detail of his appearance and habits were sent by Interpol to all its members. Many other details in our possession were sent from the Yard direct to other countries. Eventually this man was tracked down to the French Foreign Legion, in which he had enlisted under an assumed name, to hide his identity and shake the English police off his track. Preparations were in progress to have him returned to this country for trial when he was reported 'missing, believed killed, in Indo-China.' So far his death has not yet been confirmed, but if he should happen to be alive anywhere in the world, the chances are that, through the wide net of Interpol, he will be caught.

The above incident is just one example of how 'distance is no object' when it comes to the activity of this International Criminal Commission; and I think now of another murderer who vainly imagined he would be safe from arrest if he could get out of this country.

A few years ago a child was murdered in Prestwich, Lancashire. Suspicion turned upon one Imre Kilyen, but he had escaped from the country. His description and all particulars concerning him were passed on to Interpol through the Yard. Every one of the nations who belong to the organisation were given the details.

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One day a man was arrested on a charge of vagrancy at Rebdorf in Bavaria. The file issued by Interpol was consulted, and the description of the wanted murderer tallied with that of the man convicted of begging. The news was flashed to the Yard, who passed it on to the Lancashire police. In a few days two police officers from that body interviewed the suspect in his cell at Rebdorf.

Yes, it was their man all right, and in due course Kilyen was brought to trial in this country and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Apart from such matters of murder, Interpol is kept busy with absconding financiers from all over the world; with smugglers and dope peddlars; with sabotage, forgery, fraud—and, in fact, every crime in the calendar. The organisation is adding daily to its file of suspects and convicted persons, thus providing an ever-widening net in which to catch the overseas criminal.

Until recently the United States and Czechoslovakia were also members of Interpol, but in 1950 the Americans withdrew, and a little later the Czechs dropped out too—following our rather pressing enquiries about the missing Foreign Office men, Burgess and Maclean, who were reported last seen in Prague.

From my own experience of the working of Interpol I am more than ever convinced that it serves a vital purpose: all the more so since 1949, when senior police officers from all the thirty-eight member countries visited Scotland Yard, exchanging varied views with each other and with us.

## CHAPTER THREE

### POLICE AND PUBLIC

WHILE THE PRESS and the public can, and happily often *do*, play a substantial part in the campaign against crime, it is naturally upon the police that the ultimate responsibility rests for the detection and apprehension of a criminal.

The work of the English police officer, no matter whether Metropolitan, City or Provincial, is to investigate all the circumstances surrounding crime, collect every available scrap of information concerning it, formulate that information into coherent evidence, and—bring the criminal to justice.

Whether he be in uniform or a member of the C.I.D., he is an *executive* officer and *not*, as in France, a 'judicial' police officer, part of the machinery of the Ministry of Justice. In France, after officers, under the direction of the Prosecutor-General, have carried out preliminary investigations into a serious crime, the matter comes before an 'examining magistrate,' who is a sort of magistrate, counsel for the prosecution and police officer all in one. He has power to question suspects and witnesses alike within very wide limits, and can even reconstruct a crime on the spot where it occurred, omitting none of the lurid details, and causing the suspect to be a witness of the scene.

To some extent the investigation of crime and prosecution of criminals in Scotland follows very much the

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same lines as in France. At the head of affairs is the Lord Advocate, under whom are the Procurators Fiscal (or Public Prosecutors) attached to every criminal court. It is their task to carry out the preliminary investigations into a crime, take statements, and prepare the evidence if the case goes to trial.

In England this responsibility rests with the police. We have no separate department for jointly conducting criminal investigations and bringing prosecutions as in France and Scotland. We have no equivalent to the office of Lord Advocate or that of Prosecutor-General with the combined power to investigate *and* prosecute.

We *do* have a Director of Public Prosecutions, but he as a rule has no part in the investigation of crime beyond the necessary preparation of a case to ensure its proper presentation in court. Even then, it is only in certain important or difficult cases that he takes charge of a prosecution. The majority of cases in the Metropolitan Police district are dealt with at court by the very competent Legal Department at Scotland Yard; so that the police can be fairly said to bear practically the whole burden of crime investigation and detection in this country.

In contrast to the Procurator in Scotland and the Prosecutor-General in France, the police of England have little more power than the ordinary citizen in carrying out their job. Nor must they set out on their enquiries in the guise of prosecutors. The sole object of the police officer, whether he be in uniform or in plain clothes, is to discover the true facts concerning any crime: in these days by no means as simple as it sounds, for the face of crime has changed considerably since I first went to Scotland Yard over forty years ago.

Gone are the leisurely days when a crook depended



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on bus, tram or hansom-cab, take him to the scene of his intended crime. Gone also, to a large extent, are the days of the measured tread, 2½ miles per hour, of the constable patrolling his beat. Today it is the motor car, usually stolen, which enables the crook to carry out a quick smash-and-grab raid and make a speedy get-away; and it is the wireless patrol car upon which the police mainly rely for an even more speedy counter-attack.

In my young police days, the constable on his beat was almost the sole means of preventing crime, and I would like to pay a big tribute to the virtues of this uniformed guardian of the peace and the excellent job he performed. Members of the C.I.D. are well aware of the important part played by a uniformed man in his approach to a crime in its opening stages. Many a time some small link has been provided by an observant and resourceful constable called to the scene of a crime, and many a criminal has been brought to justice through the vigilance and memory of the man on the beat.

No better instance comes to my mind at the moment than the arrest of John Halliday Christie, the multi-murderer of Notting Hill, who was on the run after leaving the house in Rillington Place where he murdered several women over a period of years, disposing of their bodies under a rockery, in a cupboard or under floorboards. A hue and cry was raised for him throughout the land. The Press spread themselves on the story, and reports came in from all over the country that Christie had been seen here and seen there. Enquiries showed that the reports were incorrect, due perhaps to over-eagerness on the part of the public. Days went by, and then P.C. Thomas Ledger, a uniform policeman on his beat, noticed a man leaning over the Embankment wall at Putney Bridge. He recognised the wanted

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man, Christie was arrested, and in due course hanged.

The Commissioner would like to have more men patrolling the streets on foot, especially men of P.C. Ledger's calibre, for he realises, as I have always done, that there can never be any real substitute for the man on the beat. In spite of the many new and up-to-date methods adopted in connection with police work in recent years, the police constable is still an important figure in the scheme of things, as a deterrent. That is, of course, providing that he is well trained, kept well informed of all that is happening around him, and intelligently used.

He lacks little in the way of efficient training at the various schools provided for the purpose, and he is certainly kept much more in the picture than he was when I started my career. I cannot emphasise too strongly the value of the patrolling constable, who, in walking quietly around on his beat, gets to know people in his area, becomes acquainted with their jobs and habits, gets a first-hand knowledge of the houses, shops and buildings in the locality, and is therefore quick off the mark if he observes any untoward incidents.

If an outbreak of crime should occur soon after the arrival of a certain person on his territory, he will keep discreet observation on the newcomer, and report his whereabouts and movements to the C.I.D. officer attached to his Station; or, if the occasion demands it, he will make an arrest.

Nor is this all. I am convinced that there is no more reassuring figure in the public mind than that of the uniformed constable. His presence radiates a feeling of security and confidence among the law-abiding, at the same time hampering the exploits of the crook. He is the symbol of that law and order which it is his duty to ensure.

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Yet, with the advent of the motor car and the spread of knowledge, a change has inevitably come in the methods of crime—and also in the methods of detection. So now, besides the police constable, we have a host of mechanical aids: fast and powerful cars, telephone boxes, teleprinters and wireless. These things are especially valuable in the prevention and detection of crime, because in most cases the advantage lies with the criminal, who can plan and time his operations to a split second and thus ensure surprise: it is this surprise which gives him the advantage. Time is a great factor in the campaign against crime, and hence the need for a speedy and elaborate communications system such as that embodied in the mechanics of Scotland Yard, of which I have already given some details, and which it is worth while to supplement.

In my early days many messages reached Scotland Yard by Morse, and even the telephone was not in such great use as it is today. I remember an Assistant Commissioner telling a story some years ago concerning the first telephone installed at Scotland Yard. In view of the historic nature of the event it was thought appropriate that the instrument should be placed in the office of the Commissioner. The telephone engineers entered the room and explained their mission. The Commissioner rose in fury. 'A telephone at Scotland Yard?' he fumed. 'Certainly not! Take the thing out of my room. Why—we shall be having the *public* ringing up next.'

Times have changed, and today Scotland Yard welcomes messages from the public, which is why the 999 system was instituted in 1937. Through that system any member of the public can, by dialling 999, be put into immediate touch with the Police, the Fire Brigade or the

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local Ambulance Service according to the needs of the moment. If he should ask for the police, he is at once connected with the Information Room at Scotland Yard. Night and day, skilled police officers with years of experience are on duty there, taking reports coming from all over the Metropolis from every possible source. It may be a constable on his beat reporting an accident or shop-breaking incident; it may be a message from one or other of the hundred or so radio cars, each equipped with its two-way telephone link; it may be a call from a police station, a police boat on the river, one of the police motor-cyclists, or—a member of the public.

Whatever the origin, wherever, or from whom, the message arrives, the details are carefully noted, and appropriate action taken. Every month some 60,000 calls arrive at the Yard from all sources, of which roughly 8,000 come from private persons.

On receipt of a message at the Information Room, an officer goes to one of four large tables in the room, on which lie four large maps of all the streets in the four areas of the Metropolitan Police District. It does not take long to pin-point the locality mentioned in the message, and he takes note of the position of various little counters of different shapes and sizes, scattered about the map. These represent police vehicles, cars, motor cycles, river-boats, etc., and their position in the area is indicated by their position on the map, which alters in accordance with the radio report of the man in charge. In a flash, therefore, the officer in the Information Room, by means of the two-way telephone system can get into immediate communication with any one of these vehicles and direct them to the scene of the trouble whatever it may be.

I have laboured this point because there was never :

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greater need than today for a full understanding of the relationship between police and public, nor for the close co-operation of police and public in the preservation of law and order and the prevention and detection of crime. How can the public help? In a hundred and one ways. Much of the petty larceny from houses and business premises can be traced to the carelessness of individuals in leaving places easy of access to the thief. It could have been prevented in many instances by a modicum of thought and care on the part of the owners of the premises.

Should you witness a suspicious incident, it is no good thinking: It is nothing to do with me, let the police do their own job. For the police will certainly do their own job, if you will do yours, which is to provide them with the vital information allowing them to 'get busy.'

Suppose, for example, you happen to see a car being loaded up with articles outside a shop after closing time, in circumstances that strike you as being suspicious. You feel that something wrong is going on. It may provoke just the shadow of uneasiness in your mind, and you feel loth to do anything about it. The following morning, you read in the newspaper of a robbery having occurred at the very shop or house where you had noticed the suspicious loading of the car.

Now, had you dialled 999 and given the location of the premises, with a description of the car and its number, a police car would have been on the scene in a matter of minutes. Other cars would have been detailed to cordon off an area in the vicinity, and most likely the thieves would have been captured. But, because you did not perform this little public act of duty, the thieves got away with their haul, and it may mean long and tedious enquiries before the police can get on the track of the criminals.



with whom I have day for day understanding, I have always been 'Gentle' to the police and public, nor for the sake of the word, and I care and public in the preservation have betrayed a confidence, prevention and detection of the criminal, was the help? In a hundred and the public through the medium of mercy from houses as they represented. Whenever I came to the carelessness of an investigation, be it a sensational access to the chief or a lesser crime, I have never hesitated to bring the Press into my confidence. In the first place I prevented them from presenting a garbled and inaccurate story to their readers which might possibly have affected the course of my investigations. By 'putting them in the picture' I have often been able to persuade them to hold up for the time being some item of information which they have obtained, the publication of which might have embarrassed me in my enquiries. They have never broken faith with me.

Naturally, we have not always seen eye to eye in this matter, and I spent many anxious hours in my office at the Yard when the hue and cry for Neville Heath was at its height. 'Let us publish a photograph of him,' clamoured my friends of Fleet Street. 'Issue his picture for publication and he'll soon be rounded up.'

Maybe they were right, but I had my reasons for not issuing Heath's photograph for publication, and for asking editors to refrain from publishing any which might come into their hands. At that stage of our enquiries the evidence indicating that Heath was the man we wanted depended entirely on whether one particular person could identify him: in other words, on an identification parade. Now if his picture had appeared in the Press before that parade took place, his identification would have been practically worthless. An astute defending counsel could have made great capital out of any

s...ification, no the doubts raised in the minds of  
t... would have been fully justified. So I had to  
rer... of Heath's photograph to the Press, a  
decis... which was later upheld by the Commissioner,  
Sir Harold Giffitt.

But if this was an occasion when I had to hold out to  
Fleet Street, there are others when the Yard has sought  
their aid; and here let me pay tribute to the many  
instances when the Press has rendered assistance to the  
Yard in bringing murderers to justice. It was the publi-  
cation in the newspapers of a picture of the hammer  
with which Vivian Messner was done to death in his  
Southampton garage which led to a man coming forward  
to identify that tool as one belonging to him, and to the  
identification of Podmore as the man to whom he had  
lent it about the time of the murder.

A published photograph of the trunk, in which the  
dismembered body of Mrs Bonati was deposited at the  
luggage office at Charing Cross Station, resulted in a  
taxi-driver recognising it as one belonging to a man  
with whom he had driven from a building in Rochester Row,  
Westminster, to Charing Cross Station. In that building,  
John Robinson carried on business as an estate agent,  
and in his office was found a bloodstained mallet stick  
which helped to seal his doom.

The cruel murder of P.C. Edgar will be fresh in many  
minds. He was shot dead while patrolling his beat in a  
North London suburb. In his hand he clasped a note-book  
on one page of which was scrawled the name of a man  
and the number of a national registration card. It was  
simple routine work to discover that the card belonged  
to one Donald George Thomas, but to locate Thomas  
was not so easy.

His name was issued to the Press via the Yard's



smooth-working Press Bureau, with the simple, unev-  
ident that it was hoped he might be able to tell the  
police in their enquiries into the slitting of a man's  
throat. That Thomas did not himself come forward was not  
surprising. It happened, however, that a gentleman  
named Winkless saw the paragraph, and got in touch  
with the Yard. He explained that his wife had gone off  
with a man named Donald George Thomas a few days  
before, and he was anxious to trace her. To further the  
search, he gave the Yard permission to publish in the  
Press a photograph of his missing wife.

That photograph appeared in all the national news-  
papers the following morning. It caught the eye of a  
landlady who pointed it out to her husband. 'Look,' she  
said, 'that's the woman in the room upstairs who came  
here with a man last night.'

In great excitement the husband went into the street  
and informed a constable. The latter telephoned the Yard,  
and within a few minutes the house was surrounded by  
C.I.D. and uniformed men. Thomas and Mrs Winkless  
were still in the bedroom awaiting the breakfast they  
had ordered for 8.30 a.m. The landlady was told to take  
up the breakfast tray, leave it outside the door and then  
knock.

When Thomas, all unsuspecting, opened the door to  
take in the tray, waiting police rushed into the room.  
He made a grab for the Luger pistol with which he had  
shot Edgar, but did not get a chance to use it before he  
was overcome. Later on he appeared at the Old Bailey,  
there to be sentenced to death: an ironic sentence as it  
turned out, for the Bill to suspend the death penalty for  
five years was then in process of being passed through  
Parliament. So Thomas is serving a life sentence instead  
of dying on the gallows. Surely one of the luckiest

never to have survived a death sentence, for no mitigating circumstances in the case.

After the murder of Edgar, the old cry that the police should be armed was raised once more. It is a question which I have given a great deal of thought, as have most of those who have held high-ranking positions in police forces throughout the country. In support of the cry it is generally urged that arming the police would deter armed criminals from using firearms when engaged on any criminal exploit. I am afraid the evidence does not support the suggestion, for in the United States, where the police are armed, gunfights between police and the members of the underworld are frequent and furious.

It is my opinion that any crook realising he might be wounded or even killed by a bullet from a policeman's gun would be more likely to carry a firearm than at present. I have talked this matter over with policemen of all ranks, in order to get their views on the subject, and must report an overwhelming majority among them against being armed. The shooting of police officers in the course of their duty is extremely rare in this country. What is more, they *are* armed by way of self-protection on special occasions, when, for instance, it is known that they are likely to be confronted with a desperate gunman; they were in the Thomas arrest. But arming them regularly would, to my mind, be a retrograde step which might well lead to even more armed crime than we have at present. The enforcement of law and order ought not to depend upon arming a body of men who have carried out their duties so well without firearms.

Let me conclude with a word about our policewomen.

Every Force throughout the country now has its

ent of these girls in blue, who pay for their work with very great courage and sacrifice, and their task has often been to bring them home. Quite recently one of them gave evidence of what she had witnessed in the home of a woman charged with keeping a disorderly house.

In another case a policewoman acted as a decoy in order to trap a man who had been robbing women with violence on Tooting Bec Common. He saw her assault his victims, knocking them to the ground and making off with their handbags. A young Detective Sergeant of the Women Police volunteered to venture on the Common with handbag complete. Sure enough, when Arthur Burland saw her, he crept up behind, kicked her and flung her to the ground and wrenched her arm. A near policeman came to her aid and between them Burland was arrested and received a well-merited five years' penal servitude.

Other policewomen have frequented clubs where the deadly 'reefers' and other dope find a market, and had done much to clean up the West End. One cannot speak too highly of the services they are rendering in the campaign against crime, a campaign which (to repeat a vital fact just once more) depends for its success on the teamwork of all police departments, together with such assistance as can be given by the public and the Press. The evil is as old as society itself. The dividing line between good and bad, between the law-abiding and the criminal, is so thin that all of us can sometimes pause and ponder the thought: 'There, but for the grace of God, go I.'

Let us, then, approach the problem with humanity and understanding, but with courage and determination.

